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Typeseller:
Busaway

Proofreader:
Georgi

Q-Checker:
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勝木 光

音、友通が
「頑張れることがすごいんじゃなくて、
頑張れるところがあることがすごい」
というようなことを言っていたのを
最近ふと思い出した。
今、やっと実感できてる。

勝木 光

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

8

勝木 光

KCM4149

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SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

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ベイビーステップ

CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

Baby Steps ベイビーステップ

Ei-chan

Maruo Eiichiro

Member of STC. Started tennis without much thought at first, but he likes it so much that he wants to become a pro! However, he declared that he'll give up on becoming a pro if he can't win the All-Japan Junior next year!! Are you sure Ei-chan!? It's pretty tough

Nacchan

Takasaki Natsu

Member of STC. Has a strong mind and goes into her matches with perfect mentality. Top level player of Kanagawa. She's also aiming to be a pro like Ei-chan, and their relationship is more than just friends, but less than a couple!?

Sasaki Himeko

Ei-chan's classmate. Has a crush on Ei-chan, and is getting a lot of attention from Kageyama??

Kageyama Kojirou

Ei-chan's best friend and a good ally. He's a good guy who always comes cheering for Ei-chan at his matches.

No. 2nd SEED

Okada Takayuki

Member of Kagawa TC. Extremely difficult high power rising flat shots are his basic strokes. Highly offensive, super quick style.

1st SEED

Nabae Yuu

Member of Aoishiro Academy. He uses a very efficient style that hits at the opponent's weak points. Not only that, his play style changes according to the opponent. His true skills are unfathomable.

THESE ARE THE GUYS WHO STAND IN EI-CHAN'S WAY!!

3rd SEED

Araya Hiroshi

Member of GITC. His weapons are his speed and power that come from his well-trained body. He's a frightening one-shot-turnabout baseliner.

Goal: **All Japan Junior Champion!!** But before that,

THE All Japan Junior Indoor Selections Kanto Preliminary is the immediate challenge!!

Ide Yoshiaki

4th SEED

Yoshiozaki High School. He has good techniques along with a strong mentality. He likes close games and big matches. His play style captivates the audience.

Egawa Takuma

Member of STC. Once hailed as the best in Kanagawa thanks to his gifted body and technique, he graduated from Junior and now participates in regular competitions against the pros. Pro registration after high school graduation!?

AND THE ONES WAITING FURTHER AHEAD ARE THESE TWO!

Ike Souji

A professional player the same age as Ei-chan. He moved to America because there weren't any more opponents of his age level in Japan. The man who inspired Ei-chan and Natsu to be a pro.

Baby Steps

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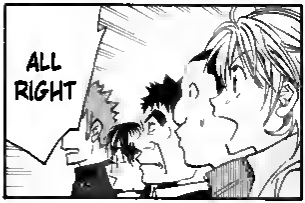
to Giant Strides

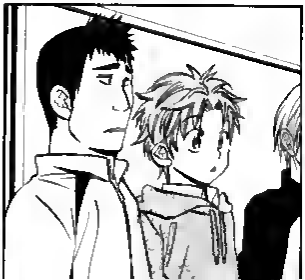
HA
ドッ

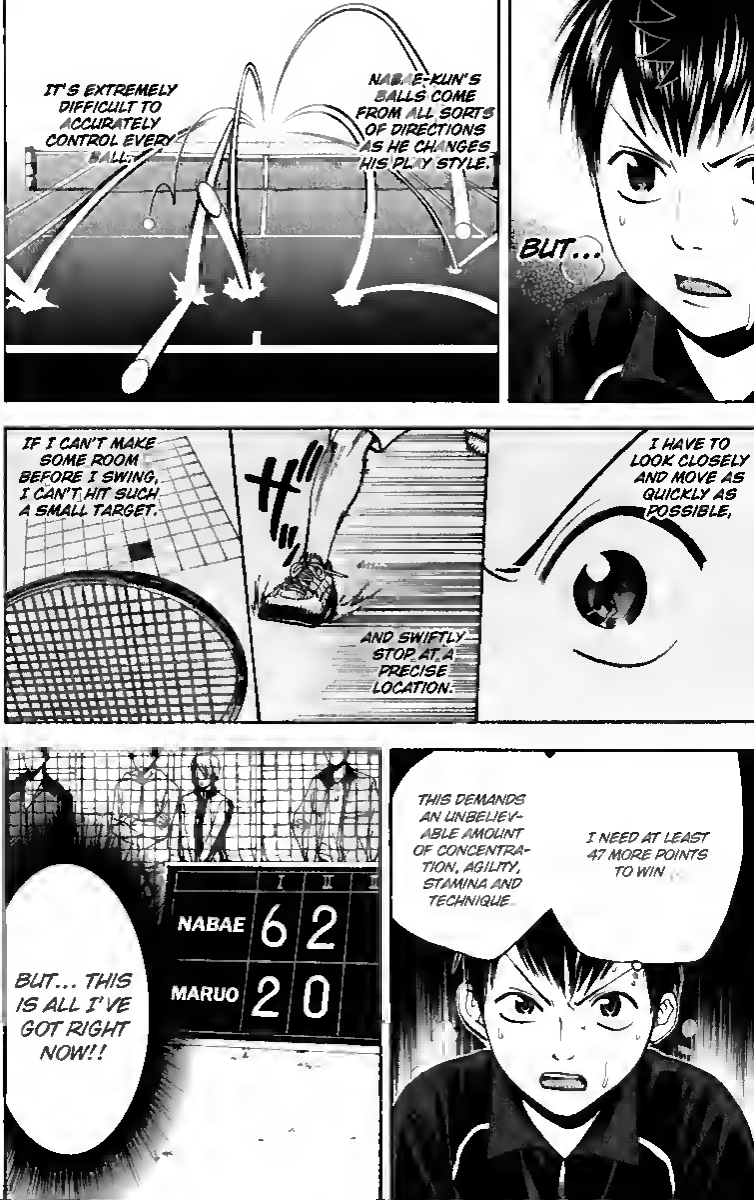
#64 CONTROL

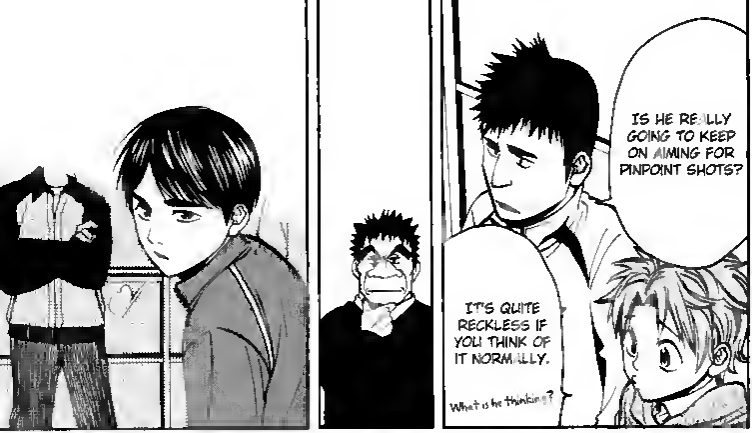
Y...
YES!!
IF I CAN CONTROL WITH A 100-PARTITION, I CAN GET A POINT...

15-ALL

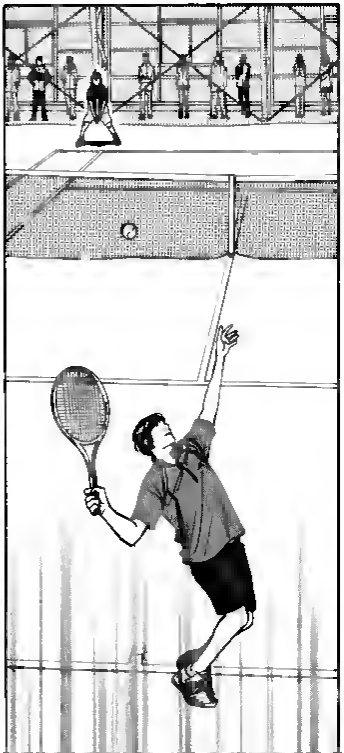

ALL RIGHT




IT'S EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ACCURATELY CONTROL EVERY BALL...
NABAE-KUN'S BALLS COME FROM ALL SORTS OF DIRECTIONS AS HE CHANGES HIS PLAY STYLE.
BUT...
IF I CAN'T MAKE SOME ROOM BEFORE I SWING, I CAN'T HIT SUCH A SMALL TARGET.
AND SWIFTLY STOP AT A PRECISE LOCATION.
I HAVE TO LOOK CLOSELY AND MOVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE,
NABAE 6 2
MARUO 2 0
BUT... THIS IS ALL I'VE GOT RIGHT NOW!!
THIS DEMANDS AN UNBELIEVABLE AMOUNT OF CONCENTRATION, AGILITY, STAMINA AND TECHNIQUE...
I NEED AT LEAST 47 MORE POINTS TO WIN


IS HE REALLY GOING TO KEEP ON AIMING FOR PINPOINT SHOTS?
IT'S QUITE RECKLESS IF YOU THINK OF IT NORMALLY.
What is he thinking?

OBSERVE!!

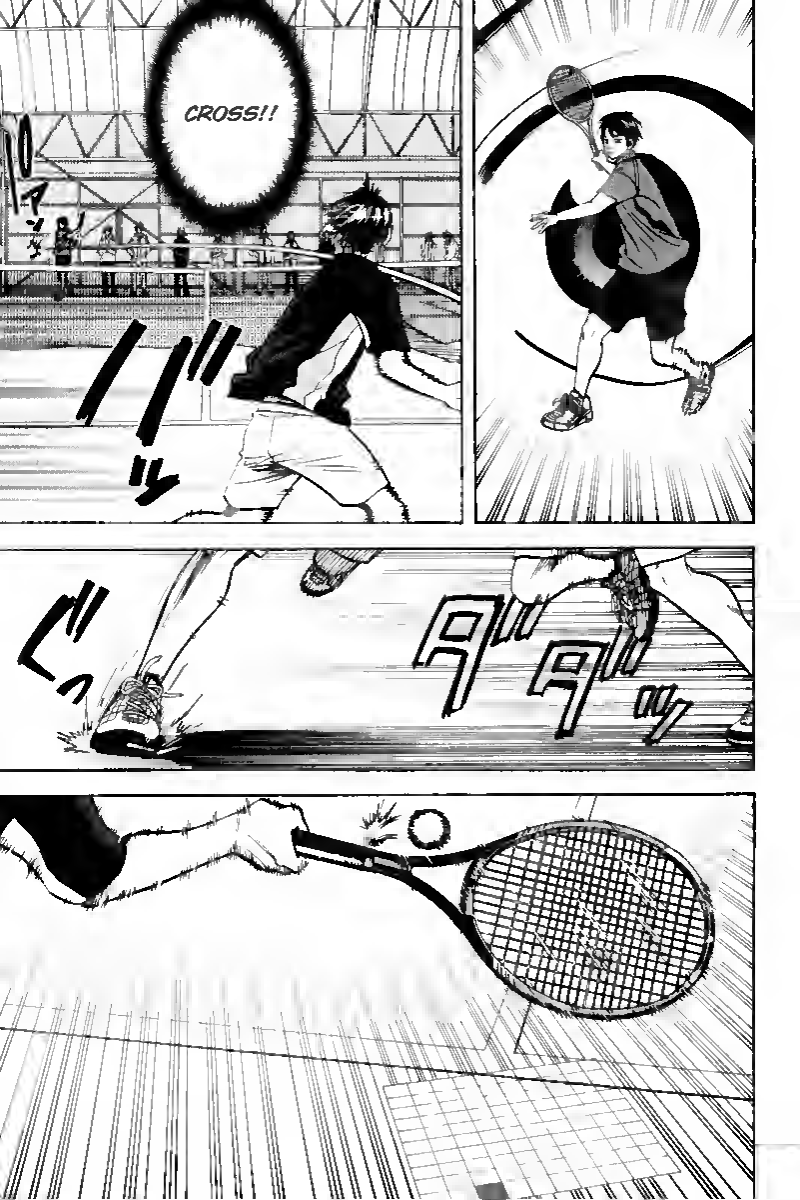


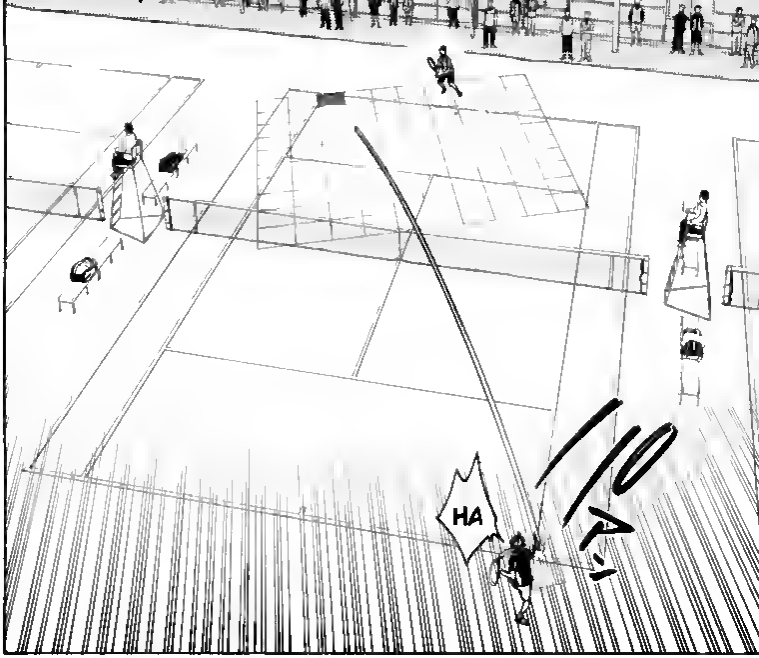
GRR
カッ

ドッ

INCREDIBLE SPIN!!
I CAN'T ALIGN MY TARGET WITH THIS THING.

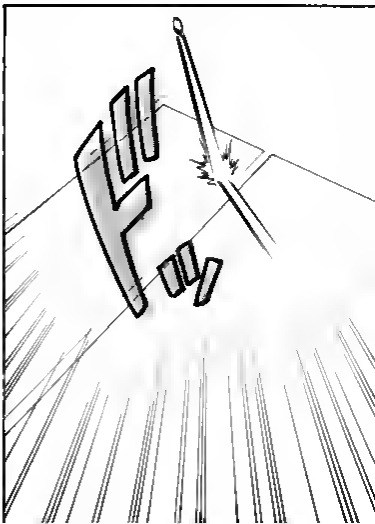
I JUST HAVE TO FIND A SMALL OPENING TO AIM FOR.
ONE IS ALL I NEED

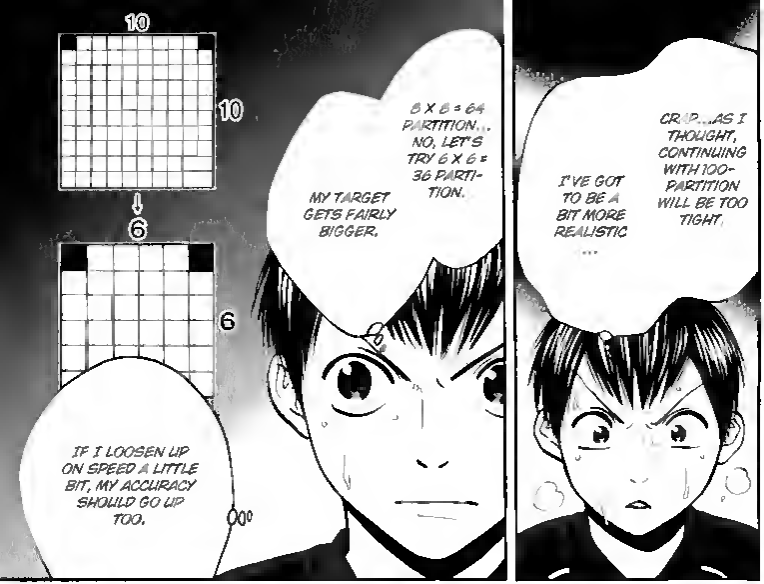

CROSS!!

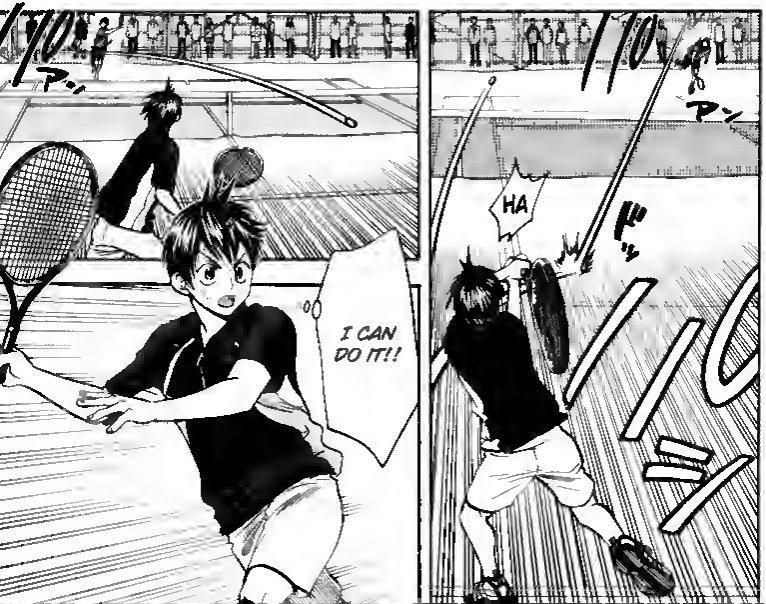

HA

OUT!
30-15
GRR

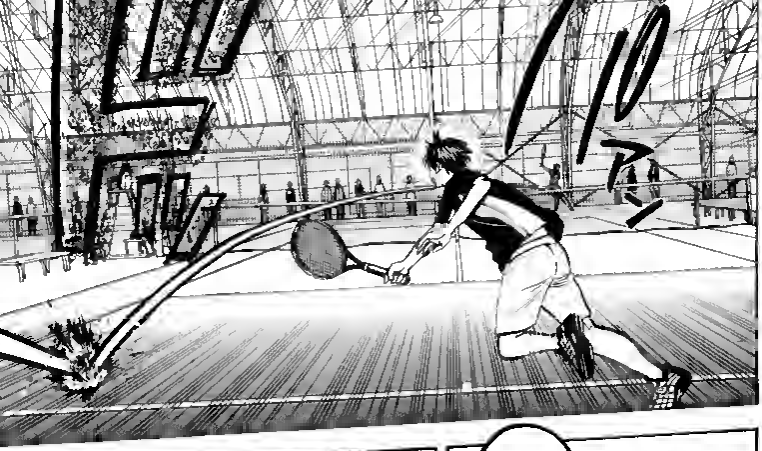
AH—
CLOSE!!
BUT HE'S AIMING FOR TIGHT SPOTS TOO MUCH.



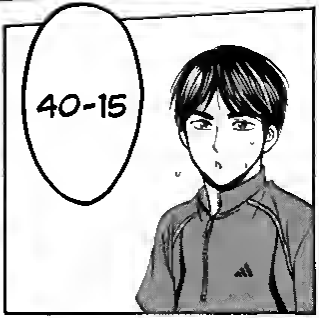

10
10
6
6
IF I LOOSEN UP ON SPEED A LITTLE BIT, MY ACCURACY SHOULD GO UP TOO.
MY TARGET GETS FAIRLY BIGGER.
8 X 8 = 64 PARTITION... NO, LET'S TRY 6 X 6 = 36 PARTITION.
I'VE GOT TO BE A BIT MORE REALISTIC ...
CRAP...AS I THOUGHT, CONTINUING WITH 100-PARTITION WILL BE TOO TIGHT.


I CAN DO IT!!
HA

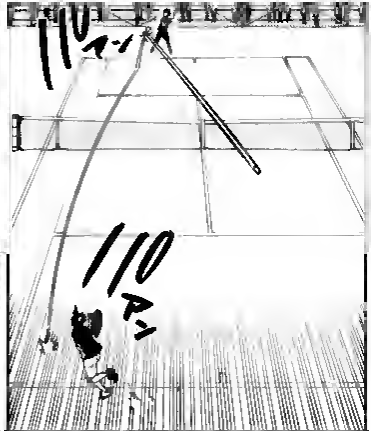
ドッ
ハーア
HA
IT WENT IN
!!



HE GOT ME... THIS IS TOO WEAK.


40-15

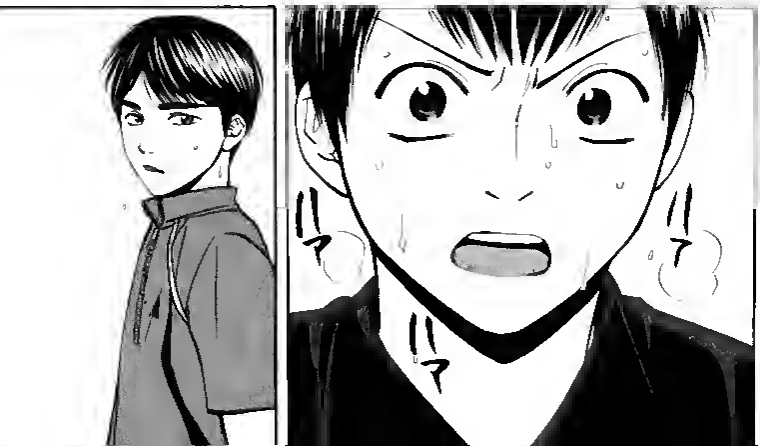
THEN, WITH A BIT MORE SPEED..



1164!!
HA
アン
ドッ
GO!!

IT'S PRETTY HARD TO TELL
OH... WAS THAT IN?
WHICH IS IT?

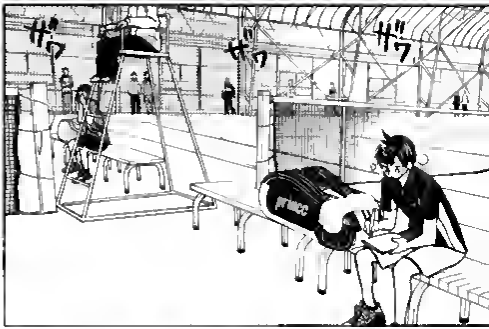
GAME, NABAE. 3-0. SECOND SET.
OUT!



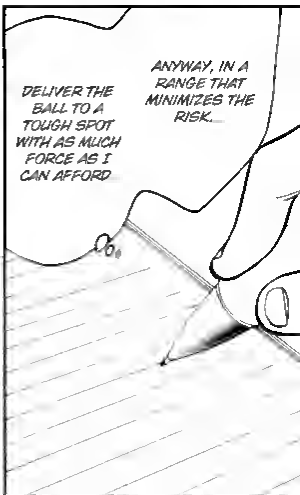
...

ANIKI'S SELF-DESTRUCTING... THIS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE.
THAT'S ENOUGH. JUST PLAY SAFE ALREADY!!

EVEN WITH 1164, THE RISK IS PRETTY HIGH...
BUT I CAN DO IT IF I LOWER THE SPEED A BIT MORE



TIME
IT'S A BIT OF A STRETCH, BUT THIS IS THE BALANCE I HAVE TO MAINTAIN IN ORDER TO WIN POINTS.
MAXIMUM 80% SPEED WITH 1164 CONTROL IS PROBABLY MY BEST.

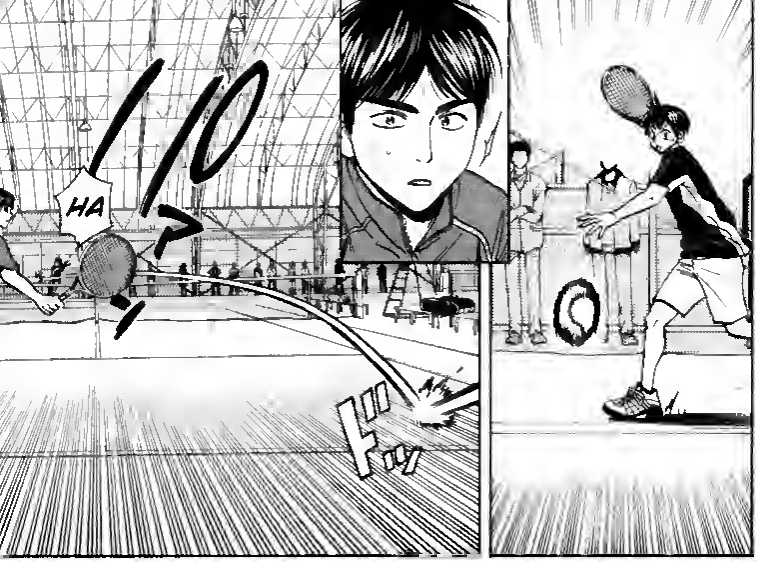

DELIVER THE BALL TO A TOUGH SPOT WITH AS MUCH FORCE AS I CAN AFFORD
ANYWAY, IN A RANGE THAT MINIMIZES THE RISK...

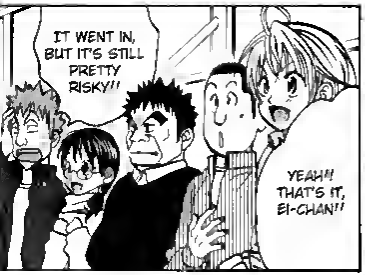
I'M NOT TALL LIKE TAKUMA-SAN.
AND I'M NOT STRONG LIKE ARAYA-KUN.
"IF YOU CAN GET TO EVERY BALL AND CONTROL IT WITH PERFECT ACCURACY, THEO-RETICALLY, YOU CAN'T LOSE."
BUT... STILL...
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO WIN!!

ANYWAY, GET TO THE BALL AND ACCURATELY CONTROL IT...
IF IT'S CONTROL ...

HA
FOCUS ON THE COURSE RIGHT FROM THE FIRST SERVE!!
SAME FOR SERVES...
I PUSHED HIM OUTSIDE ... CAN I DO IT!?
1/64

HA
ア!
ドン
YES


HA
ドッ


IT WENT IN, BUT IT'S STILL PRETTY RISKY!!
YEAH!! THAT'S IT, EI-CHAN!!

FOR HIS PLAY STYLE TO GET SOLIDIFIED WHEN DRIVEN INTO A CORNER...

ALL RIGHT!!
15-LOVE

LOOKS LIKE HE'S FINALLY DISCOVERED THE DIRECTION IN WHICH HE SHOULD BE GOING.
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HE DECIDED TO MAKE A RISKY BET BECAUSE HE GOT CORNERED.
HIS STEADFAST TENNIS IS TURNING INTO AN AGGRESSIVE TENNIS THAT FOCUSES ON CONTROL...

HA

IT'S SOMETHING A TENNIS PLAYER WOULD SPEND ALL HIS LIFE ON. IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO TRY TO ACHIEVE THAT DURING A MATCH.
BUT ATTACKING BY CONTROLLING THE BALL BASICALLY REQUIRES OVER ALL INCREASE IN TENNIS TECHNIQUE.

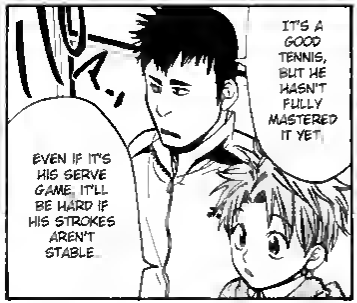
#65 ACCURACY

HA
WEAK

ERGH
15-ALL

ハァ
ドッ

ハァ
HA


ハァ
IT'S A GOOD TENNIS, BUT HE HASN'T FULLY MASTERED IT YET
EVEN IF IT'S HIS SERVE GAME, IT'LL BE HARD IF HIS STROKES AREN'T STABLE

HA
ハァ

ドッ
OUT
15-30

ハァ
WELL, HE HAS A HARD OPPONENT
IF IT WASN'T NABAE, HE WOULDN'T HAVE NEEDED THAT MUCH CONTROL

OUT
15-40
GAME, NABAE. 4-0. SECOND SET.
EI-CHAN!

I'M STARTING TO GET THE HANG OF IT.

HITTING THE TARGET ACCURATELY

DOESN'T MEAN I SHOULD QUICKLY DASH IN WITHOUT THINKING.

I'LL NATURALLY HIT THE TARGET
USE SMALL STEPS TO ADJUST MY STANCE...
IF I PLACE MY RIGHT LEG AT THE RIGHT POSITION AT THE RIGHT TIMING,
110
HA

IT'S IN!
HA
ALL RIGHT
LOVE-15

パーン
YOU COULD ALSO CALL IT RISKY.
OH!? THAT WAS PRETTY GOOD.
パーン
15-30
ドッ
ドッ
15-ALL
ドッ
EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE OUT OF BOUNDS, HIS ACCURACY IS DEFINITELY INCREASING.

IT'S GETTING BETTER
STRONGER, MORE ACCURATE...
BUT, IT'S STILL NOT ENOUGH IN ORDER TO BREAK THE GAME.
HA

WOW... MARUO-KUN'S AMAZ-ING!!
DEFINITELY... IT LOOKS GOOD IN AN AMATEUR'S EYES,
MAYBE.
BUT IN ORDER TO BREAK A SERVICE GAME,
YOU'VE GOT TO FIRST STEAL THE OPPONENT'S LEAD.
BEING "GOOD" ISN'T ENOUGH IN THIS SITUATION
EVEN IF HE'S FIT FOR IT,
IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO INCREASE HIS ACCURACY TO SUCH AN EXTENT IN JUST ONE MATCH?
GRRR
10
PST
ING

バーン
バーン
I II
6 5
2 0
Unfortunately, he doesn't manage to break Nabae's serve game, and the second set goes to 6-0.
ALL RIGHT!!
But on the next game, Eiichiro succeeds in keeping his serve game for the first time this
バーン
ドン
6 5
2 1
But with this big of a gap, unless Maruo makes a break, this moment is unavoidable.

MATCH POINT...!!
40-30

MARUO WILL LOSE IF HE LOSES THIS POINT.
BUT HE STILL HAS A CHANCE IF HE CAN REACH A DEUCE.
NABAE~ FINISH IT WITH ONE SHOT!!
MARUO!! GOOD LUCK!!

MY CONTROL IS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER I HAVE A CHANCE IF THIS MATCH DRAGS ON!!
I MANAGED TO KEEP ONE GAME... AS LONG AS I BREAK THIS, I CAN DEFINITELY CHANGE THE FLOW OF THIS MATCH
IT'S NOT OVER YET!!

HOW IS HE GOING TO ATTACK?
WHERE?
FIRST, THOUGH, HOW AM I GOING TO STEAL HIS LEAD FROM THIS SERVE?

A SPIN BALL TO THE CENTER!!
MY EYES ARE ALREADY USED TO THIS ONE.
SERVE & VOLLEY!!

A LOW SHOT!!
CAN I DO IT!?

HA
ALL RIGHT
I SURVIVED THROUGH IT!!

OUT

EH!?

...EH?

ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
...

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...EH?
OUT!
EH!?
#66 STRATEGIC ABILITY: D

R...RIGHT?
EH~~~!? THAT WAS IN, RIGHT?
IT DID SEEM LIKE IT WENT IN...
U~~M IT'S A BIT TRICKY.
WASN'T IT? THAT'S WHAT THE REFEREE SAYS.
THAT WAS AN OUT?

I'M NOT SAYING IT OUT OF INTUITION. I SAW IT CLEARLY WITH MY EYES.
ザワ
ザワ
W...WAIT A SECOND.
THAT W/S IN!!
I... I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN MY EYES!

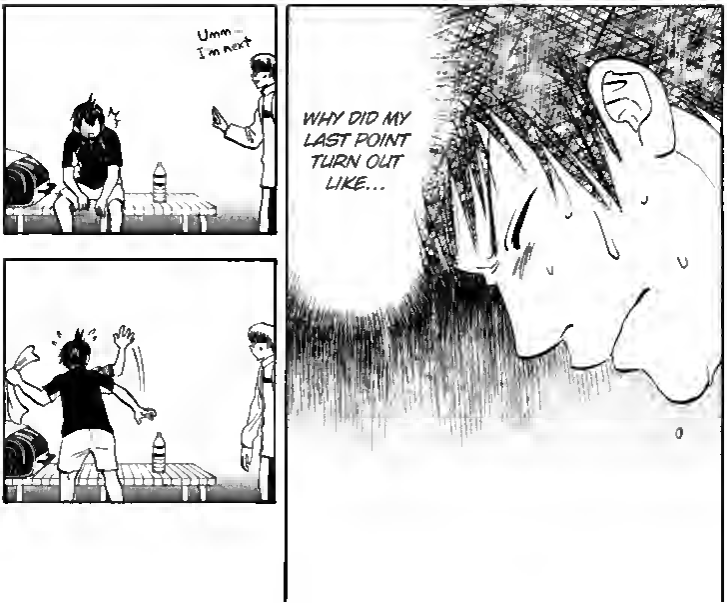
N...NO, IT'S OUT.
B...BUT... STILL...
しん
GAME WON BY NABAE. COUNT: 6-2 6-1.

THANK YOU FOR THE MATCH.
THA... THANK YOU
SO IT ENDED.
EVEN ANIKI SHOULD KNOW THAT A REFEREE'S JUDGMENT ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CAN OVERRULE...
YEAH.... EVEN THOUGH HE CAN'T STAND LEAVING THINGS IMPROPER.
FOR ANIKI TO GO THAT FAR...

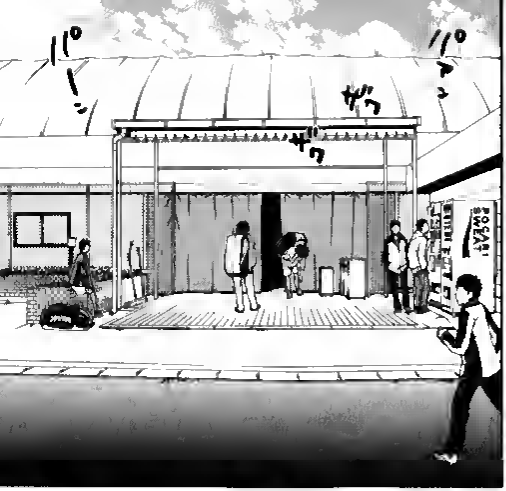
THAT LAST BALL.
IT WAS DEFINITELY IN.
BUT THE REFEREE IS ALSO HUMAN... AS YOU PLAY MORE AND MORE MATCHES, YOU'D DEFINITELY RUN INTO A MISJUDGMENT AT SOME POINT.
IT'S UNLUCKY FOR HIM THAT IT HAPPENED ON THE MATCH POINT, BUT
THAT'S ALL PART OF THE GAME... THAT'S WHY HE SHOULDN'T HAVE AIMED FOR THAT TIGHT OF A TARGET ON THE MATCH POINT.
NO...
THAT'S NOT IT.

MAYBE I SHOULD FEEL THREATENED BY THE FACT THAT HE WENT FOR IT EVEN THOUGH IT WAS THE MATCH POINT.
HE DEFINITELY DIDN'T HIT THAT WITH THE INTENTION OF GIVING UP.
HE WAS CLEARLY AIMING FOR IT UNDER THAT SITUATION.
IT WAS AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT CHOICE THAT WAS TOTALLY BEYOND COMMON SENSE, BUT HE DIDN'T SELF-DESTRUCT TILL THE VERY END.
SINCE THAT WENT IN, I CAN'T CALL IT RECKLESS.

DA~~~~~~~MN
EVEN THOUGH I WAS JUST ABOUT TO GET THE HANG OF IT.
MY CHANCES OF BREAKING WOULD'VE INCREASED IF WE WENT TO A DEUCE
THE CHANCE OF WINNING WAS LOW, BUT IT WASN'T ZERO.


Umm... I'm next
WHY DID MY LAST POINT TURN OUT LIKE...

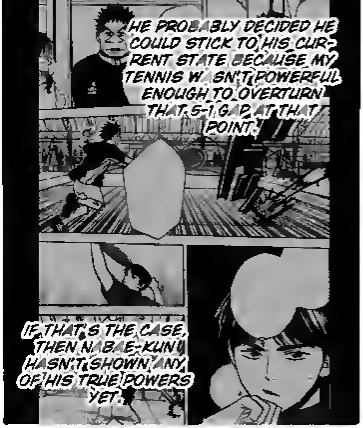
ガヴ
ガヴ
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN TELL HIM EXCEPT THAT IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
ガヴ
ガヴ
THEN I'LL GO GET READY FOR THE NEXT MATCH.
THA. THA
EH? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CHEER HIM UP?
I'LL LEAVE IT FOR LATER IN THIS CASE.
YEAH

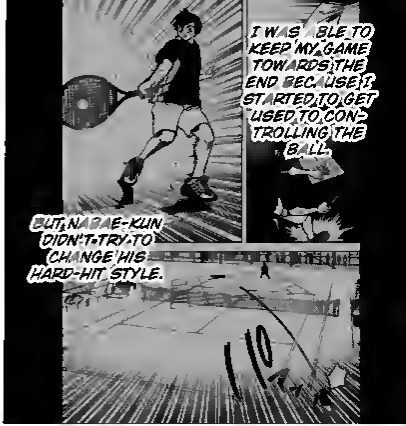

パーン
ザワ
ザワ
パーン
パコーン

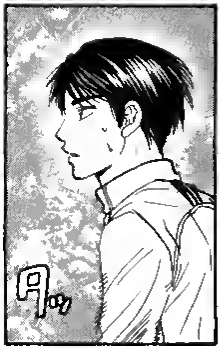
I WONDER WHAT PERCENTAGE OF NABAE-KUN'S STRENGTH I MANAGED TO PULL OUT WITH MY 100%?

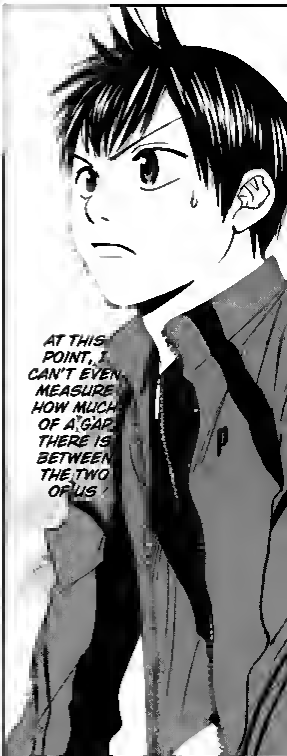
I'VE GOT TO FORGET ABOUT THAT MATCH POINT.
HOW WOULD IT BE LIKE IF I IGNORE THAT?

I TOTALLY LOST...
NO MATTER HOW I LOOK AT IT, IT'S A COMPLETE LOSS...

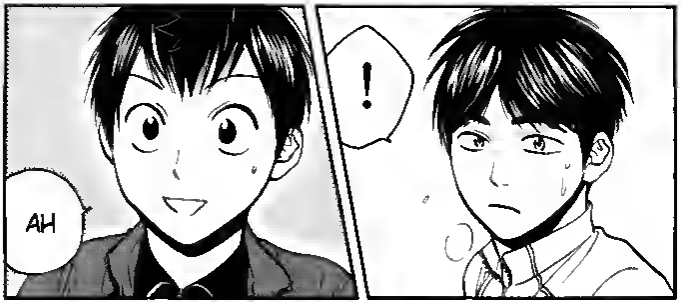

HE PROBABLY DECIDED HE COULD STICK TO HIS CURRENT STATE BECAUSE MY TENNIS WASN'T POWERFUL ENOUGH TO OVERTURN THAT 5-1 GAP AT THAT POINT.
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN NABAE-KUN HASN'T SHOWN ANY OF HIS TRUE POWERS YET.


I WAS ABLE TO KEEP MY GAME TOWARDS THE END BECAUSE I STARTED TO GET USED TO CONTROLLING THE BALL.
BUT NABAE-KUN DIDN'T TRY TO CHANGE HIS HARD-HIT STYLE.




AT THIS POINT, I CAN'T EVEN MEASURE HOW MUCH OF A GAP THERE IS BETWEEN THE TWO OF US.

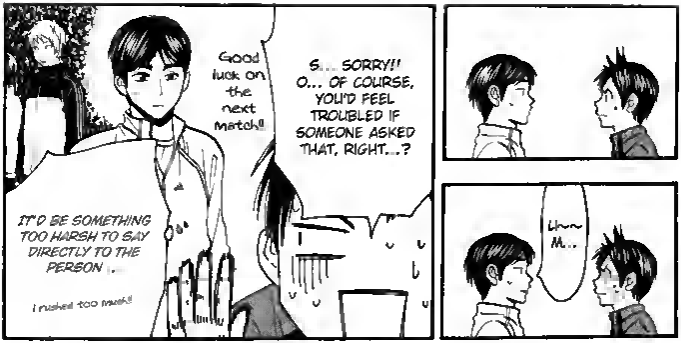
NA... NABAE-KUN!


!
AH

WHY?
AH...NO, UMM....
IT'S NOT SOME-THING I SHOULD ASK RIGHT AFTER TH..T MATCH, BUT...

NO, I'M JUST COOLING DOWN.
ARE... ARE YOU IN A HURRY?
Good work.
G.. good work!!

EH...
I WANTED TO ASK WHAT MY TABLE WOULD LOOK LIKE.
YOU WERE MAKING SOME KIND OF A TABLE TO ANALYZE THE PLAYERS, RIGHT?
メンタル
精神力
判断力
機敏性
ストローク
フォア
トップスピン
フラット
スライス
バック
トップスピン
フラット
スライス
スピン
フラット
スライス
スピン
フラット


IT'D BE SOMETHING TOO HARSH TO SAY DIRECTLY TO THE PERSON..
I rushed too much!!
Good luck on the next match!!
S... SORRY!! O... OF COURSE, YOU'D FEEL TROUBLED IF SOMEONE ASKED THAT, RIGHT...?
Uhm M...

I THINK YOUR STRENGTH OF MIND WAS AN A.
YOU NEVER WAVERED TILL THE END.
THERE'S PROBABLY A LOT OF B'S AND C'S FOR TECHNIQUE.
PHYSICAL ABILITY IS ALSO B.
ALSO ..

NO... IS IT EVEN BEFORE THAT?
SO MY CONTROL WAS RECK-LESS?
D FOR STRATE-GIC ABIL-ITY...
OR...

STRATEGIC ABILITY MIGHT BE A D.

D... IT IS A D, BUT...

ACTUALLY, IT MIGHT BE A BIT WRONG
CAN YOU FORGET ABOUT THAT?
EH!?

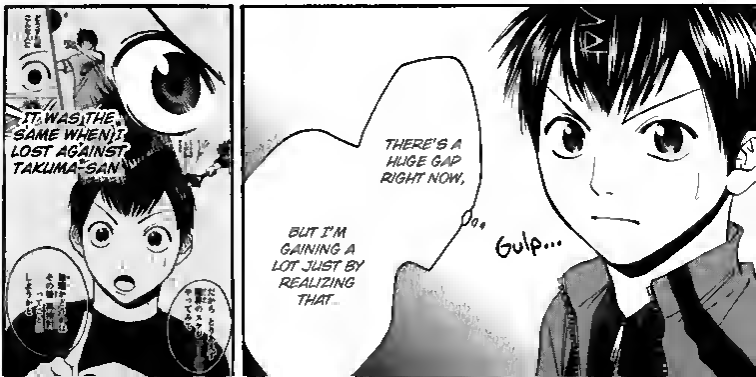
AH, NO... SORRY

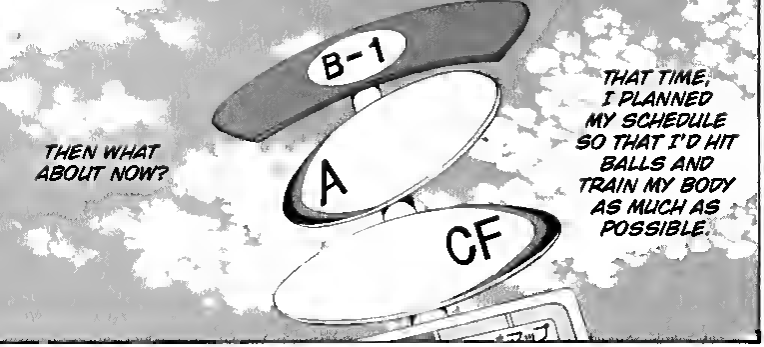
UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUM-STANCES, IT MIGHT TURN INTO AN A

'CAUSE..

IT FEELS LIKE I'LL BE FIGHTING YOU AGAIN AT SOME POINT.
NOT AT ALL THANKS!!
See ya
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT CAREFULLY LATER
Sorry
...
...IF WE WERE TO FIGHT AGAIN...
IT'D BE... THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR

BY THEN, HE'S A WALL I MUST SURPASS NO MATTER WHAT.


IT WAS THE SAME WHEN I LOST AGAINST TAKUMA-SAN.
THERE'S A HUGE GAP RIGHT NOW,
BUT I'M GAINING A LOT JUST BY REALIZING THAT.
Gulp...


B-1
A
CF
THEN WHAT ABOUT NOW?
THAT TIME, I PLANNED MY SCHEDULE SO THAT I'D HIT BALLS AND TRAIN MY BODY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

WHAT CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO FILL THIS GAP?

there I go!!
COURT NO.4: NO.31, FUKAZAWA YUKICHI-KUN, NO.32, OKADA TAKAYUKI-KUN.

COURT NO.3: NO.9 IDE YOSHIAKI-KUN, NO.10 NARIKIYO HIROTO-KUN.

2nd Seed
Okada Takayuki
(Kagawa TC)
4th Seed
Ide Yoshiaki
(Yoshiozaki High)
NABAE-KUN ISN'T MY ONLY ENEMY!!
AH

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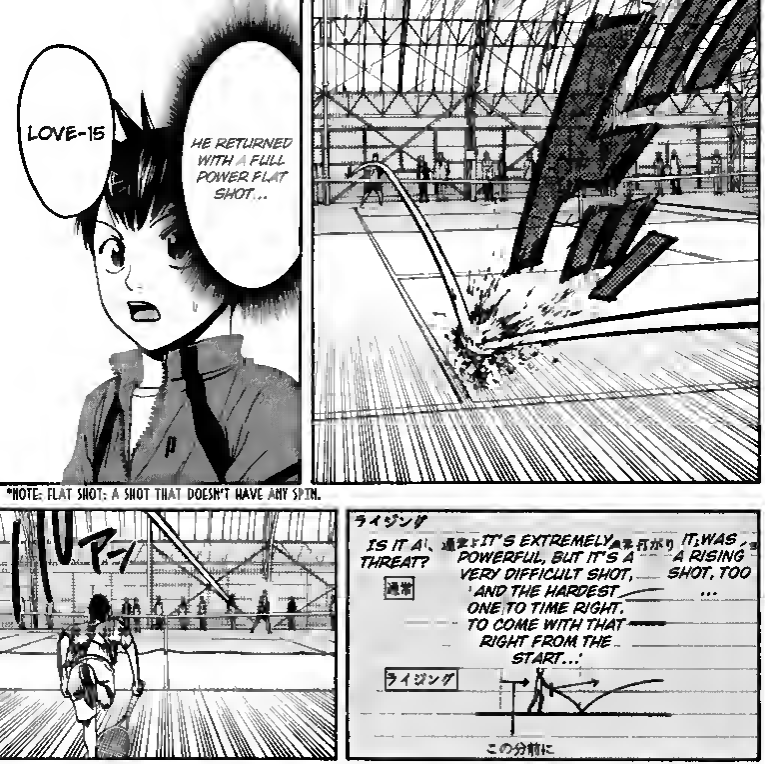
4th Seed
Ide Yoshiaki
(Yoshiozaki High)
VS
Narikiyo Hiroto
(Billy Bubble TA)
2nd Seed
Okada Takayuki
(Kagawa TC)
VS
Fukazawa Yukichi
(STC)
THE BEST OF THREE SETS. FUKAZAWA TO SERVE!!
GO, GO, YUKICHI-KUN!!
#67 TO THE NATIONALS

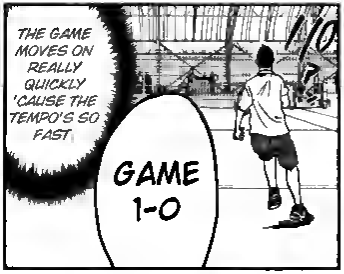
IT'S THE SAME NO MATTER WHERE YOU HIT...
COME ON, STOP SCREWING AROUND AND BRING IT ON, ALREADY ...
ORA
HA

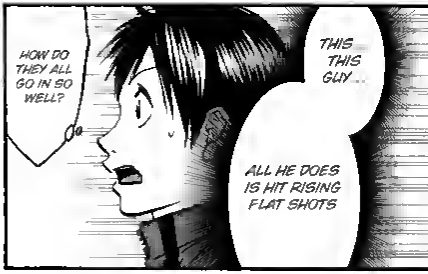


*NOTE: FLAT SHOT: A SHOT THAT DOESN'T HAVE ANY SPIN.

ライジング
IS IT A THREAT?
通常
IT'S EXTREMELY POWERFUL, BUT IT'S A VERY DIFFICULT SHOT, AND THE HARDEST ONE TO TIME RIGHT. TO COME WITH THAT RIGHT FROM THE START...'
IT WAS A RISING SHOT, TOO ...
ライジング
この分野に

RYAA

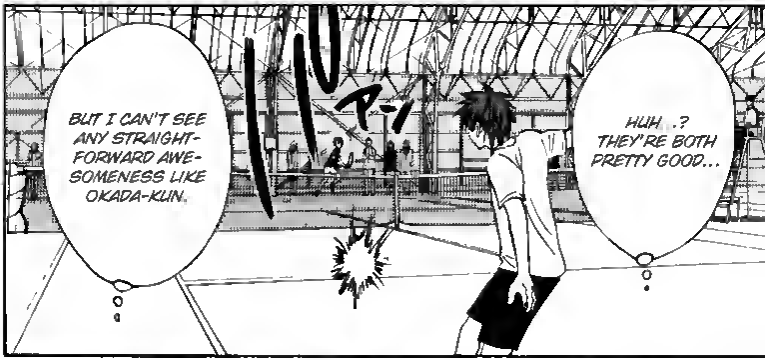

THE GAME MOVES ON REALLY QUICKLY 'CAUSE THE TEMPO'S SO FAST
GAME 1-0

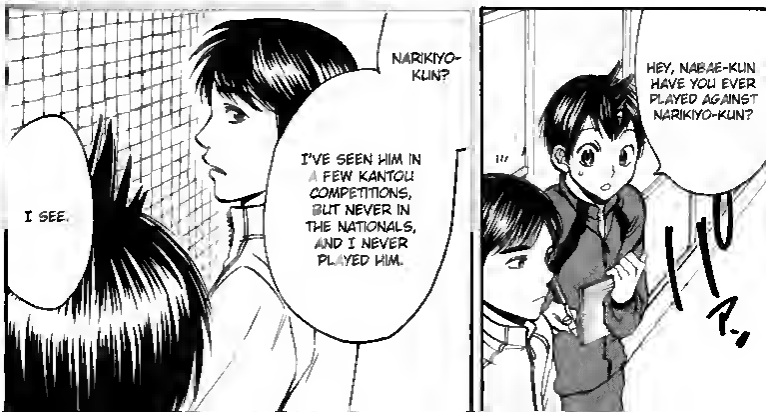

HOW DO THEY ALL GO IN SO WELL?
THIS... THIS GUY...
ALL HE DOES IS HIT RISING FLAT SHOTS

SUPER FAST OFFENSIVE TYPE, RISING FLAT SHOT STYLE BASE-LINER.
SO LONG.
I'LL FINISH THIS IN NO TIME

GAME, NARIKIYO 1 - 0.
NARIKIYO-KUN'S SO COOOOOOOL!!
THAT'S SOME POPULARITY.
NICE BREAK!!
GO, GO! KEEP ON GOING ♥
EH...? BREAK?
HE STOLE A SERVICE GAME FROM THE 4TH SEED, IDE-KUN.

HA
ア…
ア…
ビッ

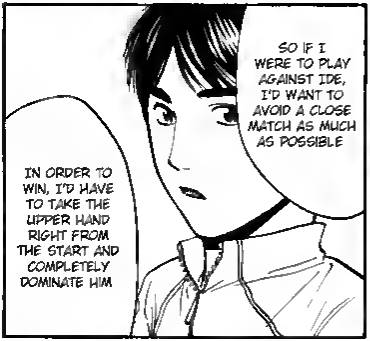

HUH..? THEY'RE BOTH PRETTY GOOD...
ア…!
BUT I CAN'T SEE ANY STRAIGHT-FORWARD AWE-SOMENESS LIKE OKADA-KUN.


HEY, NABAE-KUN HAVE YOU EVER PLAYED AGAINST NARIKIYO-KUN?
!!!
ア…
NARIKIYO-KUN?
I'VE SEEN HIM IN A FEW KANTOU COMPETITIONS, BUT NEVER IN THE NATIONALS, AND I NEVER PLAYED HIM.
I SEE.

HE'S A PRETTY UNIQUE PLAYER.
EH?
HMMM... BUT YOU'D BETTER FOCUS ON IDE.
MAYBE HE SUDDENLY GOT BETTER?
じー
ALTHOUGH I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT AT ALL,
WHEN THERE ARE A LOT OF SPECTATORS AND EVERYONE'S ALL HEATED UP,
OR WHEN THE OPPONENT'S REALLY STRONG OR HAS SOME SORT OF HISTORY WITH IDE,
OR WHEN IDE'S PLAYING A POINT THAT HE ABSOLUTELY CAN'T LOSE...
WITHOUT DISTINCTION WHENEVER HE HAS TO WIN.
HE DISPLAYS INCREDIBLE STRENGTH.

わっ
ALTHOUGH HIS TECHNIQUE ISN'T QUITE UP TO THAT LEVEL
I THINK HE POSSESSES A MENTALITY CLOSE TO A TOP-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE,

HA
ハアーン
ドン


SO IF I WERE TO PLAY AGAINST IDE, I'D WANT TO AVOID A CLOSE MATCH AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
IN ORDER TO WIN, I'D HAVE TO TAKE THE UPPER HAND RIGHT FROM THE START AND COMPLETELY DOMINATE HIM

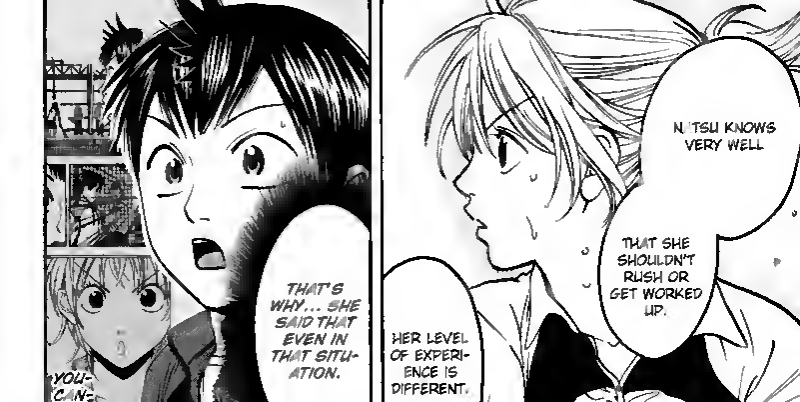
うおー
GAME, OKADA 2-0
AH. THAT'S WAY TOO FAST, YUKICHI-KUN

I SEE
カキカキ
カタカタ
SO THERE ARE THOSE KINDS OF STRENGTHS TOO

NACCHAN'S IN TROUBLE!?
OU by KIDY
1st Incoming Mail
From Kageyama Kojirou
Sub Emergency
Nacchan's in trouble!
Come to court A-3 ASAP!
URBANO
!
KAGE-YAMA?
YOU-CAN-WIN!!

AH, EI-CHAN.
WHAT'S GOING ON!?
鷹崎 4 4
6 5
SHE'S ONE SET DOWN, AND LOSING 4-5 IN THE SECOND IT'S THE OPPONENT'S SERVE, TOO
SHE'S HELD ON THROUGH THREE MATCH POINTS ALREADY.
THE OPPONENT IS NAKAJOU MEGUMI. SHE'S A HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMEN WHO'S BEEN GOING THROUGH REMARKABLE GROWTH AFTER WINNING THE ALL-JAPAN MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPETITION LAST YEAR.
ALTHOUGH IT'S THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER, SHE'S BEEN AGGRESSIVELY PUSHING NATSU INTO A CORNER BEFORE NATSU COULD GET USED TO HER PECULIAR STYLE

BUT IT SHOULD BE FINE FOR NATSU.
HUH?...
EVEN THOUGH HER OPPONENT HAS THE UPPER HAND IN TERMS OF SCORE,
YOU CAN'T QUITE TELL WHICH ONE'S WINNING IF YOU ONLY LOOK AT THEIR FACES...


N. TSU KNOWS VERY WELL
THAT SHE SHOULDN'T RUSH OR GET WORKED UP.
HER LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT.
THAT'S WHY... SHE SAID THAT EVEN IN THAT SITUATION.
YOU CAN WIN!!

GAME, TAKASAKI. 5-5!
ALL RIGHT, SHE MADE IT THROUGH!!
HA
!?
!?
!?
THANK GOODNESS THIS GAME WAS THE ONLY POSSIBLE CHANCE FOR HER OPPONENT TO WIN.
BECAUSE THE REMARKABLE THING ABOUT NATSU IS...

THAT SHE CAN MAINTAIN THIS MENTALITY FOR THE ENTIRE MATCH.
HER NATURAL POWER OF CON-CENTRATION.
15-LOVE

IN...
INCREDIBLE!!

わっ
SHE MADE A COMEBACK AND WAS COMPLETELY DOMINATING AT THE END!!
GAME, SET, MATCH, WON BY TAKASAKI. COUNT: 4-6, 7-5, 6-1.
TAKASAKI NATSU IS SO STRONG
AS EXPECTED OF A 1ST SEED...
EI-CHAN!!
NICE WORK! THAT WAS AMAZING!!
AH... EVERYONE.
NICE GAME!

I WON~
AH... THAT'S RIGHT!!
YOU DID IT!! CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU WON TWICE, SO YOU'RE ADVANCING TO THE NATIONALS!
WAIT, YUKICHI-KUN, HOW ABOUT YOUR MATCH?
IT'S OVER ALREADY.
I lost
Ah!!

HA
ERGH

わー
わー
HE FORCED THAT BALL INTO A SMASH... JUST ONE SHOT...
WOW
HE DOESN'T CARE EVEN IF IT'S A CLOSE GAME.
that's quite an attitude...

DOESN'T IDE-KUN LOOK PRETTY COOL, TOO?
HE EVEN ENDED UP STEALING THE AUDIENCE.
SO THIS IS KANTOU...

NO... NATIONAL LEVEL TENNIS.

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IDE-KUN MADE THE MATCH AS DRAMATIC AS IT COULD BE, BUT IN THE END, HE CAME OUT ON TOP IN ALL THE CRUCIAL MOMENTS AND EARNED A CLEAN VICTORY.

GAME, SET AND MATCH, WON BY IDE. COUNT: 6-4, 6-4.

#68 INTRUDER?

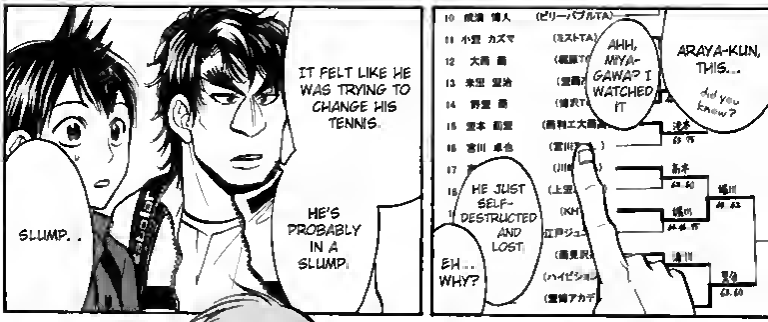
SO BY SUNSET, THE SECOND ROUND WAS OVER, AND THE NATIONALS REPRESENTATIVES WERE DETERMINED.

ARAYA-KUN ALSO WON TWICE AND PROCEEDED TO THE NATIONALS.

HIGHLIGHTED: 16 MIYAGAWA TAKUYA (MIYAGAWA T.A.)

EH ? MIYAGAWA-KUN LOST IN THE FIRST ROUND?

CONGRATS ON QUALIFYING FOR THE NATIONALS.
OH, THANKS. YOU HAD A TOUGH TIME, THOUGH.
YEAH
ARAYA-KUN
HEY!

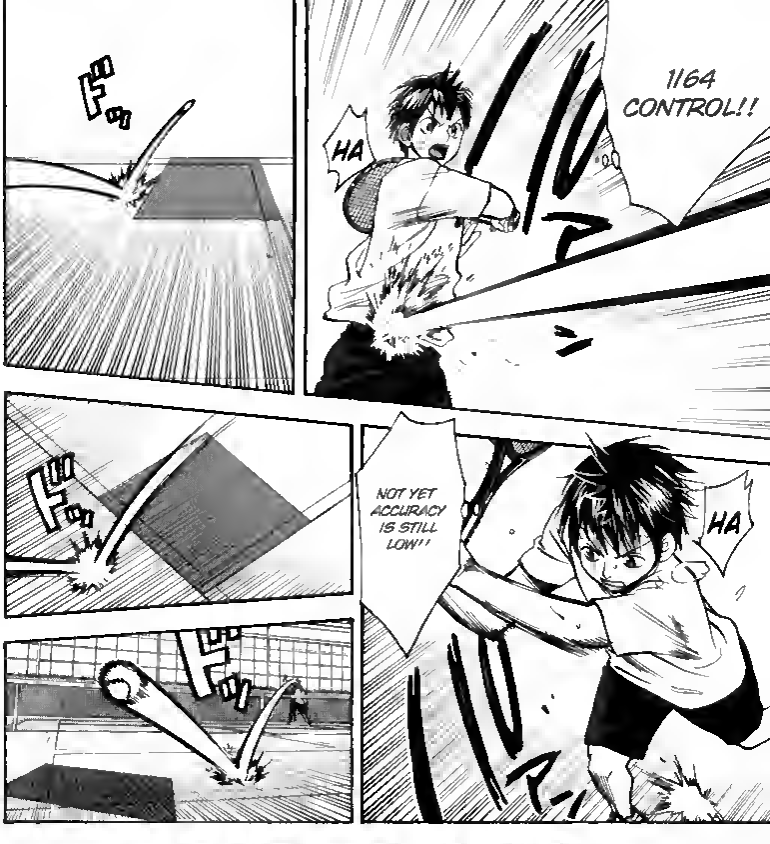

IT FELT LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO CHANGE HIS TENNIS.
HE'S PROBABLY IN A SLUMP.
SLUMP. .
EH.. WHY?
HE JUST SELF-DESTRUCTED AND LOST.
AHH, MIYAGAWA? I WATCHED IT
ARAYA-KUN, THIS... did you know?

WELL, IF IT'S HIM, HE'LL PROBABLY OVERCOME IT BY THE JUNIOR REGIONALS IN SPRING.

ANIKI!!
AH... EVERY-ONE
...
YOU SHOULD BE PRE-PARED FOR HIM
AND THUS, MY ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR INDOOR SELECTIONALS ENDED...
I WAS ON MY WAY HOME AFTER SAYING GOODBYE TO NACCHAN AND THE COACHES.
MY HEAD'S... ALREADY FULL OF THINGS I NEED TO DO ONCE I GET BACK...

FROM THIS POINT ON, ALL I CAN DO IS PRACTICE!!
HIGH KNEES, THEN SPRINT!!
LINE TOUCH 10 TIMES
HA

ALL RIGHT, IT'S TIME. THAT'S IT FOR TODAY.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
ANIKI~ I WONDER IF NACCHAN AND THE OTHERS ARE WINNING RIGHT NOW
HAVE A SAFE TRIP HOME
I'M SURE THEY'RE WINNING, IT'S NACCHAN.
RATHER THAN THAT... CAN YOU HELP ME PRACTICE A BIT MORE?
HON-ESTLY... YOU SURE WORK HARD
PLEASE!! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS HIT THE BALL TO ME...!!
EH!? FOR REAL?


1164 CONTROL!!
HA
NOT YET ACCURACY IS STILL LOW!!
HA

I WON'T BE ABLE TO COMPETE IN THE NATIONALS.
DAMN . IT'S AS HARD AS I EXPECTED....
BUT IF I DON'T HURRY UP AND TURN THIS INTO A WEAPON...

WE'RE OUT OF BALLS ALREADY.
YUKICHI-KUN, NEXT ONE PLEASE!
WHAT'S WRONG? IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE DESPERATE
RE-... REALLY?
—BESIDES, WE'VE BEEN PLAYING FOR AN HOUR ALREADY!!
LET'S GO HOME!
AH... YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT'S NOT GOOD TO BE TOO FIXATED ON IT

....

THANKS, YUKICHI-KUN

THE ME RIGHT NOW...

rince

FROM THEN ON, I ABSOLUTELY CANNOT LOSE, NO MATTER WHO THE OPPONENT; AND NO MATTER WHAT MISTAKES THE REFEREE MIGHT MAKE.
ONLY FOUR MONTHS LEFT TILL THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR'S QUALIFIER, THE KANAGAWA PREFECTURE JUNIOR...

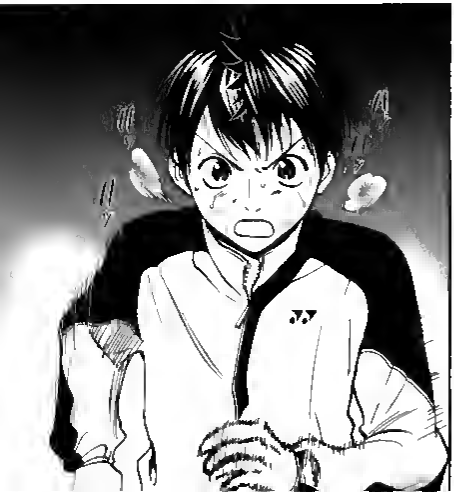
FOUR MONTHS FROM NOW, I'VE GOT TO BE ON A LEVEL WHERE I CAN DEFINITELY BEAT ANY NATIONAL LEVEL PLAYER.

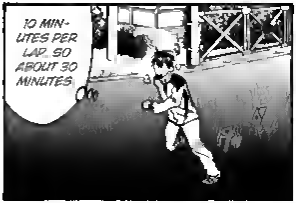
CAN'T AFFORD TO IDLE AROUND!!

ダッ
ダッ
ダッ
ダッ
ダッ
MY BODY FEELS A BIT HEAVY
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THE PRACTICE WAS HARD
BUT ACCURATE CONTROL REQUIRED A LOT MORE STEPPING POWER THAN I EXPECTED...
WITH GOOD STEPPING POWER, I CAN GET INTO MY HITTING POSITION WITH MUCH GREATER EASE
ダッ

TWO MORE LAPS.

MMM?
THAT PERSON WAS THERE BEFORE, TOO




10 MINUTES PER LAP. SO ABOUT 30 MINUTES.

I WONDER WHO HE IS... AN INTRUDER?
HUH? HE'S STILL THERE...
IT DOESN'T MATTER. DON'T GET DIS-TRACTED
AW
AW
NO... MAYBE HE'S JUST WAITING FOR SOMEONE.
HE~ ~Y
YOU THERE.
STOP STOP.
ME!?
!
AW
AW

I HAVE BUSINESS WITH COACH MIURA..
YOU'RE A KID FROM THE JUNIOR NURTURING COURSE, RIGHT?
YES.
WHAT? I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A TRAINING.
!!
!!
HE'S HERE, RIGHT?
NO HE ISN'T.
HE'S AT AN AWAY MATCH TODAY, SO HE WON'T BE BACK. WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAVE HIM A MESSAGE?
WHA.. WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS, SIR?
Eyes suspiciously.
EH? BUSINESS. WELL, I BORROWED SOME MONEY FROM HIM..
MONEY? HE'S BECOMING MORE AND MORE SUSPICIOUS
..ANYWAY, I WANT TO TALK TO HIM IN PERSON.

Ah~~~ WAIT A SEC.
IF THAT'S ALL, I'LL GET GOING.
WELL, I GUESS HE'LL BE FINE BY HIMSELF.
??
HE SEEMS LIKE A REALLY UNORGANIZED PERSON ...
I THOUGHT HE'D BE HERE TODAY ...
U~~M, I SEE... WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
That was a waste of time.

...UMM, I'M NOT REALLY CONSCIOUS OF IT.
MY POSTURE?
YOUR RUNNING POSTURE ...
IS IT ALWAYS LIKE THAT?
YOU'RE LEANING A LITTLE BIT TO THE FRONT
WHO IS THIS PERSON?
YOU STAND UP PRETTY STRAIGHT, SO THAT WILL PROBABLY STRESS YOUR BODY.
じろ
じろ

I.. I SEE. I'LL TRY TO CORRECT IT.
YOU'RE STILL GOING TO RUN?
EH?
LIE DOWN HERE FOR A BIT...
HA?
EH
WAIT ...
ドッ
WH... WHA.. WHAAA ...!?
ぎゅっ
ぎゅっ
OUCHHHHHH!?

WRONG. YOUR HIP IS SWELLING A BIT.
I THINK YOU WERE LEANING FORWARD BECAUSE OF THAT.
WHHHHH.... WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
THAT HURT, RIGHT?
OF COURSE IT'LL HURT IF YOU PRESS IT LIKE THAT!!
MY HIP IS SWELLING?

IF YOU CARE FOR IT PROPERLY, IT SHOULDN'T BECOME A BIG ISSUE.
BUT YOU SHOULDN'T OVERDO IT
YOUR HARD WORK WILL BECOME MEANINGLESS IF YOU END UP HURTING YOURSELF, RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE IN SUCH A HURRY,
BUT WORKING ON AND ON DOESN'T NECESSARILY PRODUCE THE BEST RESULTS.

AH...!! COACH MIURA, HOW ARE YOU--
NO... YES...
EHH, OF COURSE.
BRRRRRRRRR
UMM... WHO EXACTLY ARE YOU ...?
MAYBE SOMEONE CONNECTED TO STC. .?
..I WONDER WHO HE IS..
THIS MIGHT TAKE A WHILE, SO SEE YA!
YOU SHOULD HURRY UP AND GO HOME
OH WELL I'D BETTER GO HOME FOR TODAY.
....
HE SEEMS TO BE QUITE KNOWLEDGE-ABLE OF THE BODY, SO MAYBE A FORMER MEMBER OF STAFF?

OOPS... I FORGOT TO SAY THANKS.
THAT'S HOW
U----M. HE TOTALLY ...
HE SEEMS LIKE AN HONEST KID, TOO...
I FIRST MET AOI RYUHEI-SAN.

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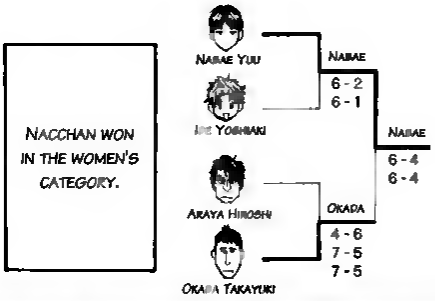
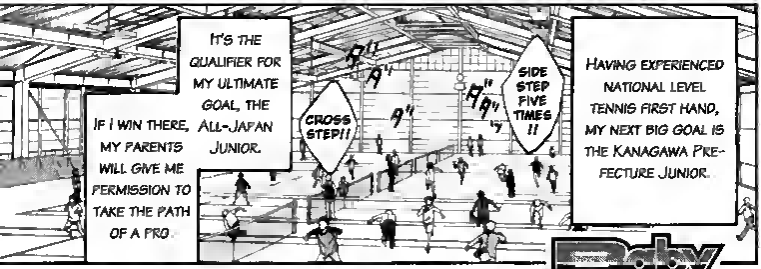
A week has passed since my match.

The All-Japan Junior Indoor Selectionals Kantou Preliminaries was won by Nabae-kun.



Nacchan won in the women's category.

Having experienced national level tennis first hand, my next big goal is the Kanagawa Prefecture Junior.

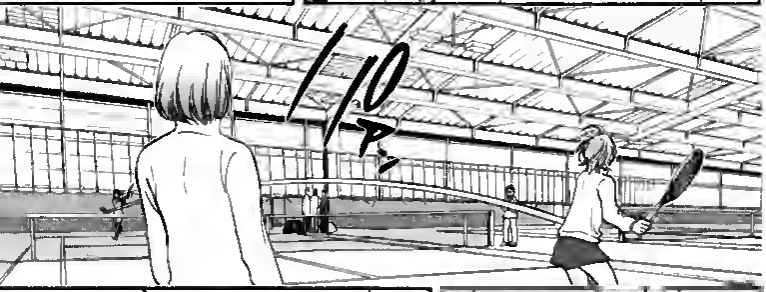

It's the qualifier for my ultimate goal, the All-Japan Junior.
If I win there, my parents will give me permission to take the path of a pro.
CROSS STEP!!
SIDE STEP FIVE TIMES !!

Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ

#69 WHAT SHOULD I DO?

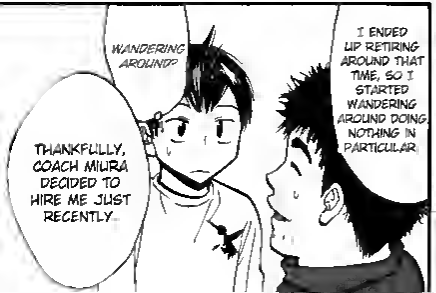
AH...
SOME OF YOU MIGHT KNOW AOI-KUN ALREADY, SINCE HE'S AN STC ALUMNUS,
BUT THEY BOTH HAVE EXPERIENCE AS PRO PLAYERS.
HE... HE'S A FORMER PRO!!
IF YOU'VE GOT ANY QUESTIONS FOR THEM, DON'T HESITATE TO ASK.

I'LL BE FOCUSING ON TAKUMA FROM NOW ON, SO I'LL BE GETTING BUSY.
WHEN I CAN'T BE HERE DUE TO FAR-AWAY MATCHES, I'LL LEAVE AOI-KUN IN CHARGE OF THE BOYS, AND SAKAKIBARA-KUN IN CHARGE OF THE GIRLS.
ALL RIGHT, THEN, LET'S BEGIN!

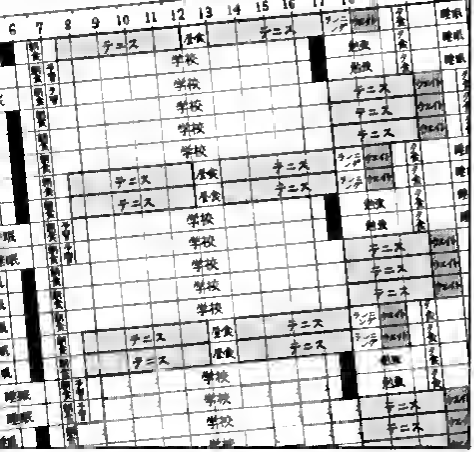


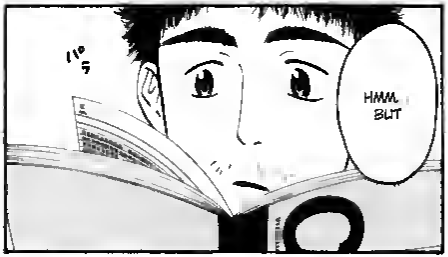
IT'S NOT THAT I HAVEN'T, BUT
UP UNTIL ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, HE USED TO COME PRACTICE HERE OCCASIONALLY.

LONG TIME NO SEE, AOI-SAN!
HEY.
EH...? YUKICHI-KUN, YOU KNOW HIM?
AH, ANIKI, YOU'VE NEVER MET HIM BEFORE?

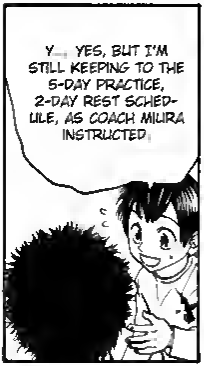

I ENDED UP RETIRING AROUND THAT TIME, SO I STARTED WANDERING AROUND DOING NOTHING IN PARTICULAR.
WANDERING AROUND?
THANKFULLY, COACH MIURA DECIDED TO HIRE ME JUST RECENTLY.

AH... I'M MARUO EIICHIRO, 2ND GRADE IN HIGH SCHOOL.
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR EARLIER.
HE DOESN'T LOOK IT AT ALL, RIGHT? He's the same as before.
BUT I'M STILL 28.
NO WONDER YOU'RE IN SUCH A RUSH
YOU STARTED TENNIS IN HIGH SCHOOL AND HAVE TO WIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR NEXT YEAR, HUH?
AHH... I HEARD FROM COACH MIURA.
HIS FIRST!
AH... YES. PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
I... I'M WORRIED.
LET'S GET ALONG, OKAY?
REGARDLESS, YOU'RE MY VERY FIRST PUPIL... I'LL SUPPORT YOU WITH ALL MY MIGHT.


BY THE WAY, MARUO-KUN, I HEARD YOU LIKE TAKING NOTES AND STUFF.
C'N YOU SHOW ME YOUR CURRENT SCHEDULE IF YOU HAVE ONE?
AH... YES.


HMM, BUT

HUH?
YOU KNOW, MY GRADES WERE HORRIBLE IN HIGH SCHOOL.
NAH, I JUST GOT A LITTLE NOSTALGIC


Y... YES, BUT I'M STILL KEEPING TO THE 5-DAY PRACTICE, 2-DAY REST SCHEDULE, AS COACH MIURA INSTRUCTED.

BUT YOU'RE DOING EVEN MORE THAN THIS RIGHT NOW, AREN'T YOU?

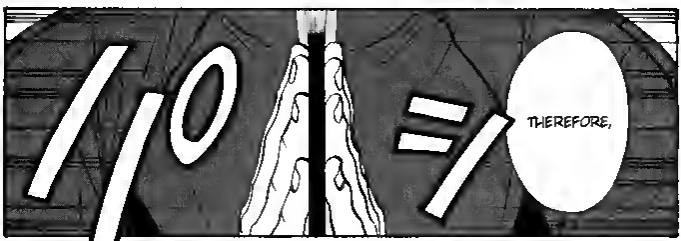
I THOUGHT SO. I STOPPED HIM FEARING HE WOULD GET INJURED.
AHH, IS THAT SO? THANKS.
HE TENDS TO WORK TOO HARD AT TIMES.

JUST AS I THOUGHT
BY THE WAY,
THERE WAS A ROOSTER-HEAD KID RUNNING AROUND AND AROUND THE CLUB HOUSE.
ROOSTER? AHH, THAT'S MARUO-KUN.

SO, AOI, HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT? ABOUT COACHING?
I NEED YOU, PARTICULARLY TO TAKE CARE OF KIDS LIKE HIM. YOU UNDERSTAND, RIGHT?

HUMANS AREN'T ROBOTS, SO YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FULFILL YOUR GOAL AT THIS RATE
EH?

IT'S GOOD THAT YOU'RE RESTING TWO DAYS EVERY WEEK,
BUT THAT ALONE DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT YOU'LL BE FINE.
?


THEREFORE,

HUH !?
THAT'S IT FOR TODAY'S PRACTICE.

C... COACH!!

AH, YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO GO HOME, YUKICHI.
BUT... ALL I DID WAS THE WARM UP.
WAIT... ARE YOU SERIOUS!?

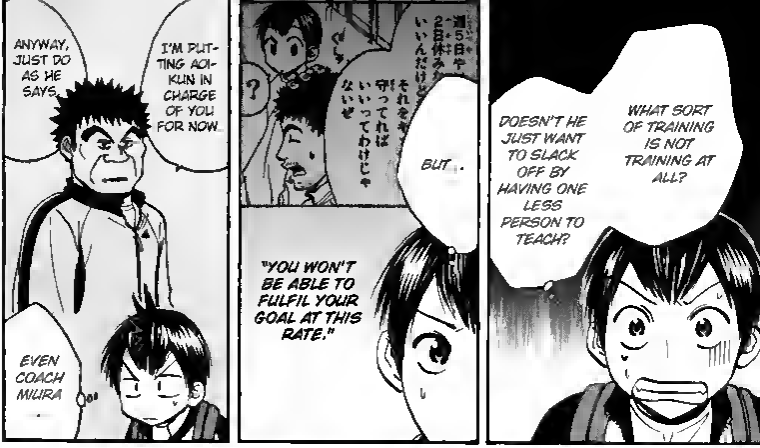
HOP, HOP, PACK YOUR BAGS AND GO HOME FOR TODAY!
WHA, WAIT...
AH, THANKS FOR THE NOTE-BOOK.

EHHHHH!!?

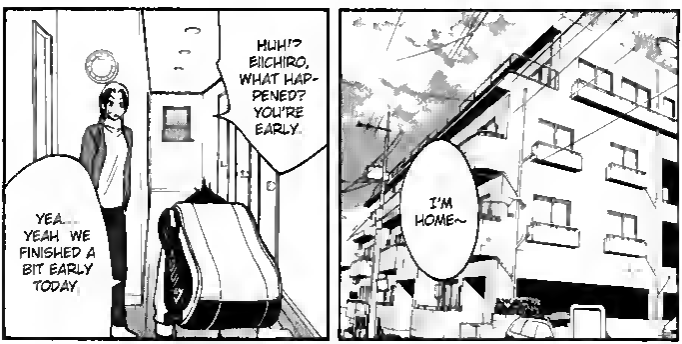
I'M PUTTING AOI-KUN IN CHARGE OF YOU FOR NOW.
ANYWAY, JUST DO AS HE SAYS.

WAHH
I ABSOLUTELY FORBID YOU FROM STRAINING YOUR BODY.
OH, FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW,
!?
FOR THE NEXT TWO DAYS, YOU MUST ONLY DO "THINGS YOU WANT TO DO".
NOT "THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO", BUT "THINGS YOU WANT TO DO".

MOVE ACCORDING TO YOUR "BODY'S" DESIRES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, RATHER THAN ACCORDING TO YOUR "HEAD'S".
IF POSSIBLE, ASK YOUR PARENTS FOR HELP.
FOOD, TOO, DON'T EAT BECAUSE OF THE TIME,
EAT WHENEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT. EAT THE THINGS YOU WANT, AND AS MUCH AS YOU WANT.
SAME GOES FOR SLEEPING.
WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE IN YOUR NOTEBOOK AND SHOW ME.
JUST SO YOU KNOW, THIS IS PART OF SOME VERY IMPORTANT TRAINING.
ALL RIGHT, THEN, SEE YA THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW
WHA... WHAT SORT OF A COACH...
THROWS HIS STUDENT OUT OF THE COURT!?


WHAT SORT OF TRAINING IS NOT TRAINING AT ALL?
DOESN'T HE JUST WANT TO SLACK OFF BY HAVING ONE LESS PERSON TO TEACH?
BUT...
"YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FULFIL YOUR GOAL AT THIS RATE."
I'M PUTTING AOI-KUN IN CHARGE OF YOU FOR NOW.
ANYWAY, JUST DO AS HE SAYS.
EVEN COACH MIURA...

GUESS... I'LL GO HOME.


I'M HOME~
HUH!? EIICHIRO, WHAT HAPPENED? YOU'RE EARLY.
YEA... YEAH WE FINISHED A BIT EARLY TODAY.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
ドサッ
prince
SHOULD I STUDY?
NO, STUDYING'S ESSENTIALLY A "THING I HAVE TO DO".
ゴロゴロ

EAT WHENEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT. EAT THE THINGS YOU WANT, AND AS MUCH AS YOU WANT.
AH...
EIICHIRO, IT'S TIME FOR DINNER
YE~S.
SORRY. I'M NOT REALLY HUNGRY YET, SO I'LL EAT LATER.
OH, REALLY? THAT'S RARE
ACTUALLY, I'M EATING!

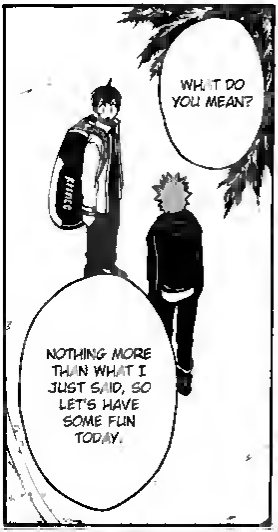
I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO...
YOU KNOW... I'VE REALLY GOT NOTHING TO DO WITHOUT TENNIS.
EVEN THOUGH THERE'S A MOUNTAIN OF THINGS "I HAVE TO DO"....
...WAIT A SECOND. IS THIS REALLY HELPFUL IN ANY WAY?
I HAVE A FEELING I'M JUST LEADING A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING LIFE.
WHEN I THINK OF HOW OTHER PEOPLE ARE WORKING HARDER AND HARDER WHILE I'M SLACKING OFF LIKE THIS
それ
それ

NEXT DAY
HMMM
SO THAT'S WHY EI-CHAN DOESN'T HAVE ANY PRACTICE TODAY.
THAT'S RIGHT.
SO?
WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING NOW?
HMM? PRACTICE.
I FIGURED IT'D BE FINE AS LONG AS I DON'T STRAIN MY BODY.
SINCE PRACTICE IS SOMETHING "I WANT TO DO"

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT NEW COACH IS THINKING. BUT I'M SURE THERE'S SOME SORT OF REASON BEHIND ALL OF THIS.
HEY, YOU SHOULDN'T DO IT!
STOP STOP.
THREE HOURS ON THE COURT IS OKAY, RIGHT?
...

I REMEMBER SEEING YOU LIKE THIS ONCE BEFORE, EI-CHAN.
ARGH, HE REALLY IS SUCH A WORKAHOLIC
BUT STILL. . OPPONENTS WHOM I CAN'T BEAT WITHOUT PRACTISING ARE GETTING BETTER EVEN AS WE SPEAK

AND ENDED UP GETTING A TERRIBLE GRADE IN YOUR CRAM SCHOOL PRACTICE EXAM, 'CAUSE YOU BLANKED OUT.
YOU TRIED TO REMEMBER EVERYTHING IN OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS,
REMEMBER THE HIGH SCHOOL PREP EXAM?

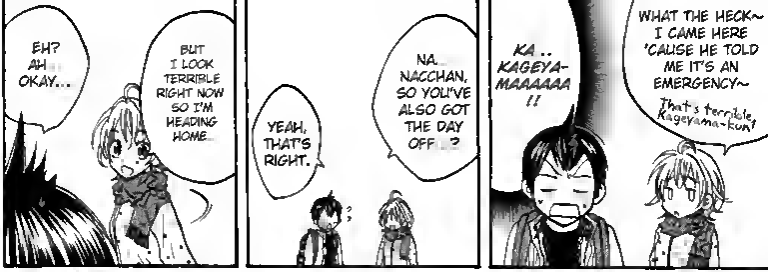

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT I JUST SAID, SO LET'S HAVE SOME FUN TODAY.

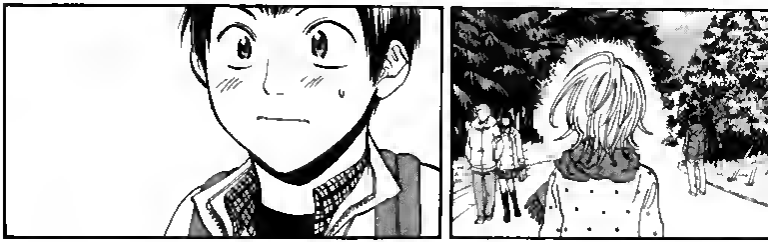
RIGHT NOW, YOU HAVE THE EXACT SAME FACE AS BACK THEN.

IT'S NO FUN WITH JUST THE TWO OF US, SO I CALLED SOMEONE.
HUH?

WHO DID YOU CALL?

NAC-CHAN!?
WHAT'RE YOU GUYS UP TO?
I REMEMBERED NACCHAN'S HOUSE WAS SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE YOU'RE FAST
WHA-
GEEZ, IT WAS SO SUDDEN, SO I CAME OUT IN A HURRY I LOOK HORRIBLE
SO... WHAT'S UP?
WHAT?
NAH, I FIGURED YOU WERE BORED, SO..
OHHHH, THAT'S RIGHT!! SHOOT!! I... I FORGOT I HAD SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO DO!!
EH!?
MY BAD! I'VE GOTTA GO!! SEE YA!


EH? AH... OKAY...
BUT I LOOK TERRIBLE RIGHT NOW SO I'M HEADING HOME...
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.
NA... NACCHAN, SO YOU'VE ALSO GOT THE DAY OFF...?
KA.. KAGEYA-MAAAAAA!!
WHAT THE HECK~ I CAME HERE 'CAUSE HE TOLD ME IT'S AN EMERGENCY~
That's terrible, Kageyama-kun!



HEY, WHY DON'T WE GO SOMEWHERE TOGETHER?

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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

RAWs:
Share

Cleaner:
Stark

Translator:
Ruggia

Typesetter:
Busaway

Proofreader:
Georgi

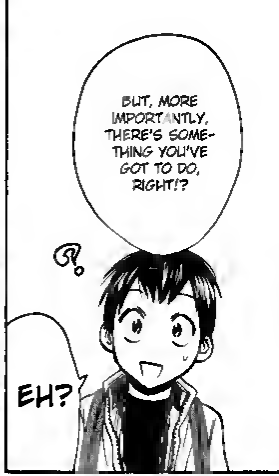
Q-Checker:
purgatory13z
ilikefaad

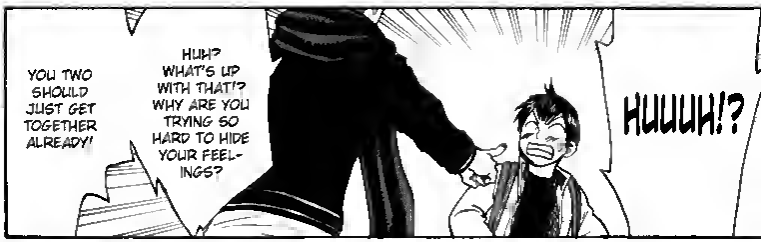
#70 WITHOUT THINKING...

ガヤ
YOU'D BETTER ASK HER OUT PROPERLY~~~
U~RGH, I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING
ALL~~~~~ RIGHT!! HE MANAGED TO MAKE HER STAY!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOU DUMBASS!?
I CREATED THE PERFECT CHANCE FOR YOU, SO USE IT PROPERLY!!
!?
KA... KA.... KAGE-YAMA!!

NICE WORK!!
...BUT... EVEN THOUGH IT'S WHAT I WAS HOPING FOR, IT WENT WAY TOO SMOOTHLY FOR EI-CHAN.
OKAY, THEN I'LL GO BACK AND GET CHANGED, SO...
SEE YA IN ONE HOUR, IN FRONT OF THE STATION!
—'S WHAT HAP-PENED.
OH!? GREAT!! YOU AC-TUALLY ASKED HER OUT!!
RE... REALLY? WORDS JUST ENDED UP POP-PING OUT OF MY MOUTH.
B...BUT WHAT SHOULD I DO!? I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE WHAT TO DO OR WHERE TO GO!
LAST TIME WE WERE IN A SIMI-LAR SITUATION, WE WENT TO A MATCH, BUT...
WHY DON'T YOU JUST STICK TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW AND GO WHEREVER YOU WANT?
MAYBE IT'S BE-CAUSE MY LIFE HAS BEEN SO OUT OF WHACK SINCE YESTERDAY, AFTER MY COACH TOLD ME, "ONLY DO THE THINGS YOU WANT TO DO"
HMMM
THAT COACH MIGHT ACTU-ALLY BE A GOOD MATCH FOR YOU, EI-CHAN.

DON'T GIVE ME "EH?"!
CONFESS, CONFESS!!


BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'VE GOT TO DO, RIGHT!?
EH?


YOU TWO SHOULD JUST GET TOGETHER ALREADY!
HUH!? WHAT'S UP WITH THAT!? WHY ARE YOU TRYING SO HARD TO HIDE YOUR FEELINGS?
HUUUH!?

YOU'LL NEVER GET A CHANCE LIKE THIS AGAIN!!
ANYWAY, GO CONFESS!!
GEEZ, IT'S NOT "OUT OF THE BLUE" AT ALL!! AS FOR ME, I'M TROUBLED IF YOU GUYS DON'T GET TOGETHER QUICKLY
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING OUT OF THE BLUE ..? THAT'S JUST RIDICULOUS
WHY...

WAIT.... WAIT A SEC...
I WON'T LEAVE YOU IN ONE PIECE IF YOU END UP WASTING MY ASSIST!!
EI-CHAN!
YEAH CALM DOWN, AND
I JUST HAVE TO ACT NATURAL LIKE THAT TIME WHEN WE WENT TO WATCH TENNIS
I'M ALL NERVOUS NOW BE-CAUSE OF ALL HIS NONSENSE
GEEZ WHAT'S KAGEYAMA THINKING?

I'M HERE~
AS EXPECTED OF EI-CHAN EVEN THOUGH I CAME 5 MINUTES EARLY
AH ... ERR ....
WHERE SHALL WE GO, THEN?

ARE YOU LISTENING?
EH...!? AH... I'M LISTENING... I'M LISTENING...
HUH? EI-CHAN?
EI-CHAN, ANYWHERE YOU WANNA GO?
カあ～！
I WONDER WHERE
I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT YET
SOMEWHERE I WANNA GO SOMEWHERE I WANT TO GO IS, U～M...
ACT NATURAL. ACT NATURAAAL.
I WANT TO GO SHOPPING, WATCH A MOVIE, EAT SOMETHING SWEET...
I ALSO WANT TO GO TO A TENNIS MATCH, AND TO KARAOKE, TOO!
NACCHAN, IS THERE ANYWHERE YOU WANT TO GO?
TONS OF PLACES～

I WANT TO GO WHEREVER NACCHAN WANTS TO GO.

WHICH ONE?
LET'S DO IT, THEN.
ALL OF THEM!

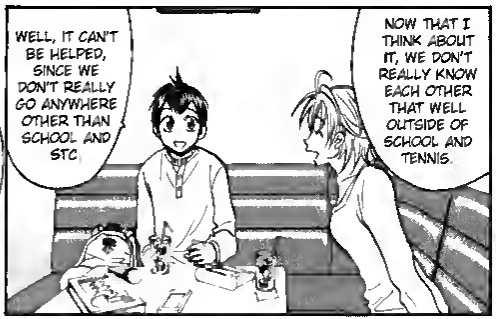
30% OFF!

...HE'S ACTUALLY PRETTY GOOD!!
カラオケ

WE'RE GOING KARAOKE NEXT WEEK, SO MEMORIZE THESE SONGS
EH?!
YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO SOME POPULAR MUSIC TOO
Thanks, Kageyama!
KAGEYAMA'S NOSINESS TURNED OUT HELPFUL WHEN I LEAST EXPECTED IT

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WHY"...? AM I REALLY THAT GOOD? I CAN'T TELL
YOU DEFINITELY DON'T LOOK LIKE SOMEONE WHO'D GO TO KARAOKE
Your pitch is perfect~
WOW, WHY ARE YOU SO GOOD?

AH, I'M UP.


WELL, IT CAN'T BE HELPED, SINCE WE DON'T REALLY GO ANYWHERE OTHER THAN SCHOOL AND STC.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, WE DON'T REALLY KNOW EACH OTHER THAT WELL OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND TENNIS.

THIS FEELS STRANGE
KARAOKE WITH JUST NACCHAN AND ME
ISN'T THIS JUST AS IF
WE'RE HERE ALL ALONE, JUST THE TWO OF US.
IT'S TRUE THAT I'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE LIKE THIS ...
CON-FESS!!
WE WERE GOING OUT TOGETHER?!
ドキドキ
ドキ
ブブー

WHAT NACCHAN THINKS OF ME...
IN THE FIRST PLACE, I WONDER
BEFORE THAT, I...
I GUESS IT'S A BIT OF A STRETCH TO CONCLUDE THAT SHE LIKES ME, THOUGH...
APPARENTLY EVERYONE IN CLASS TOLD HER THAT SHE'S "LIKE MY GIRLFRIEND".
BUT SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST IT.

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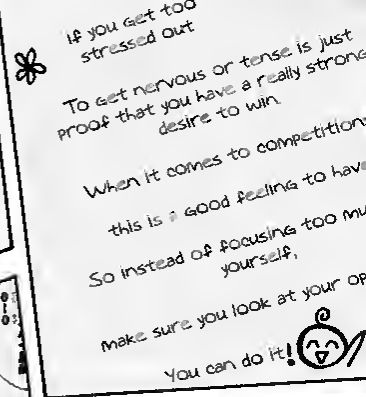
If you get too
stressed out
To get nervous or tense is just
proof that you have a really strong
desire to win
When it comes to competition
this is a good feeling to have
So instead of focusing too mu
yourself,
Make sure you look at your op
You can do it!

IF YOU FIND A WAY TO WIN OR AN OPPORTUNITY OPENS UP FOR YOU, THEN YOU HAVE TO HOLD ON TO THAT
EI-CHAN IT'S BEEN REALLY HARD FOR YOU THEN, HASN'T IT?
YOUR OPPONENTS IN THE TOP A ARE GOING TO BE EXTREMELY STRONG SO THE MATCHES ARE PRETTY MUCH NOT GOING TO GO

HEAD

SO THIS IS WHERE IT ALL BEGINS FOR US, HUH?

YOU'RE REALLY AMAZING!!

EI-CHAN?
WAH
GEEZ, I'M DONE WHY ARE YOU SPACING OUT?
COME ON, IT'S YOUR TURN NEXT.
S SORRY, I WAS JUST THINKING OF SOME-THING
EH?
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT?
I... I WAS THINKING OF YOU, NACCHAN
WHY WERE YOU THINKING WHEN I WAS SINGING?

I WAS JUST WONDER-ING.... UMM...
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ME, NACCHAN...?
I...
....MEANIE.
THAT'S JUST NOT FAIR.

S... SORRY.
AH...
I'M REALLY SORRY.
T...THEN... I'LL FORGIVE YOU IF YOU BUY ME AN ICE CREAM.
AH... O-... OKAY.

IT'S GETTING COLD, HUH~
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ICE CREAM IN THIS COLD?
BUT I LOVE IT.
LOOK, LOOK. THE LIGHTS ARE AMAZING~
THAT'S RIGHT... IT'S ALMOST CHRISTMAS.

ALTHOUGH WE HAVE PRACTICE ON CHRISTMAS, TOO

THAT WAS FUN.
ASK ME OUT AGAIN SOMETIME.

IT'S GETTING A BIT LATE
IT'S CERTAINLY BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I HAD SUCH A NICE DAY OFF, THOUGH
SAME FOR ME

THEN, SEE YA TOMOR-ROW!!
YEAH, SEE YOU.
I'M REALLY TIRED FOR SOME REASON
I'M SO TIRED.
I GUESS I REALLY WASN'T BEING FAIR.
BUT IT REALLY WAS A LOT OF FUN.
I NEVER IMAGINED THAT TODAY WOULD TURN OUT LIKE THIS

ONE DAY...
I'LL PROPERLY...
TELL HER ALL MY FEELINGS....
THAT'S JUST NOT FAIR
I'LL WORK HARD AT TENNIS STARTING TOMORROW!!
ALLLLLL RIIIIIIIIGHT.
WHAT SHOULD I WRITE!?
...AH I'M SUPPOSED TO WRITE ALL THIS IN MY NOTE-BOOK AND TURN IT IN

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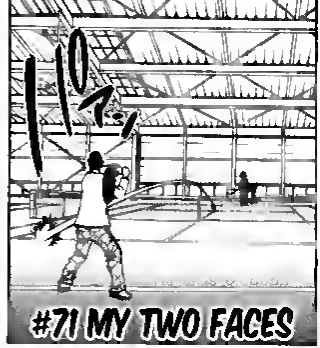
Baby Steps

RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: Busaway
Proofreader: Georgi purgatory132
Q-Checker: ilikefood

Cam
campus notebooks contain the best rule
YUP. LOOKS GOOD.

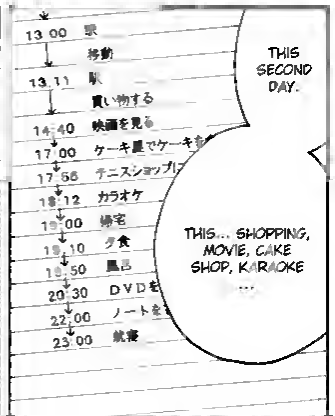

#71 MY TWO FACES

AHH, RIGHT. BUT BEFORE THAT,

WHAT WERE THESE TWO DAYS OF REST ALL ABOUT?
UMM... SO WILL YOU TELL ME ALREADY?

SEEMS LIKE YOU PROPERLY DID THE "THINGS YOU WANT TO DO"
YES. .

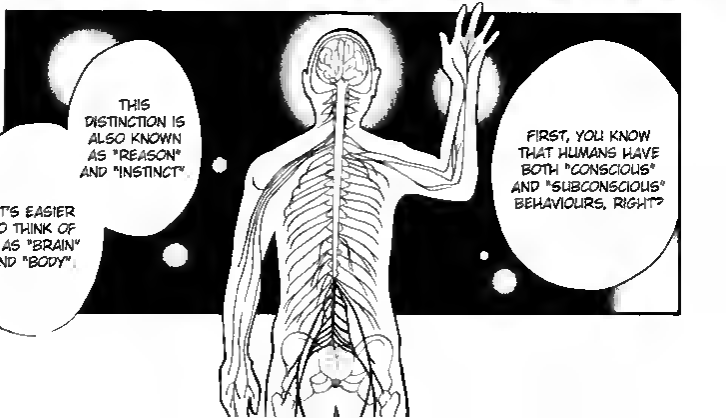
WHO WERE YOU WITH?
ギクッ


13 00 駅
移動
13 11 駅
買い物する
14 40 映画を見る
17 00 ケーキ屋でケーキ
17 56 テニスショップ
18 12 カラオケ
19 00 帰宅
19 10 夕食
19 50 風呂
20 30 DVD
22 00 ノート
23 00 就寝
THIS SECOND DAY.
THIS... SHOPPING, MOVIE, CAKE SHOP, KARAOKE ...

THAT REACTION... IT'S SUSPICIOUS.
MY INTUITION IS PRETTY GOOD WHEN IT COMES TO ANYTHING OTHER THAN GAMBLING.
SHE... SHE'S JUST A FRIEND!!!
YOU DON'T GO TO THESE KINDS OF PLACES BY YOURSELF,
AWW~ YOU HAD A GIRLFRIEND?
NA~~~H!! NOT NECESSARILY. COACHES NEED A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLAYER'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CONDITION BEFORE DECIDING ON A SCHEDULE. THIS IS ONLY POSSIBLE IF THERE'S A VERY OPEN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PLAYER.
IT... IT DOESN'T MATTER WITH WHOM.
It has nothing to do with you, coach.
COME ON.. WHO DID YOU GO WITH? TELL ME.
WHAT IS THIS GUY, A KID??
WHAT A PITY~ IT WAS ALL SO I COULD FORM A GOOD BOND WITH YOU...
HUH!?
MARUO-KUN, IF YOU WON'T TELL ME, THEN I'M NOT GOING TO TELL YOU THE PURPOSE OF THAT PRACTICE~~

I... I TOLD YOU, SO KEEP YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN.
HO HO HO.
Whisper whisper

...WELL, ENOUGH JOKING AROUND... I'll explain.
HMMM. I SEE SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS~~
THAT WAS SOME NICE INFO~~♥


FIRST, YOU KNOW THAT HUMANS HAVE BOTH "CONSCIOUS" AND "SUBCONSCIOUS" BEHAVIOURS, RIGHT?
THIS DISTINCTION IS ALSO KNOWN AS "REASON" AND "INSTINCT".
IT'S EASIER TO THINK OF IT AS "BRAIN" AND "BODY".

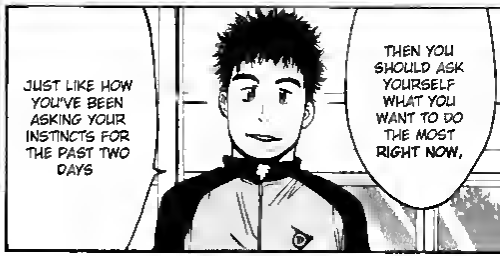
THAT'S WHY IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO BAL NCE THESE TWO.
RATIONAL MARUO
THINKS RATIONALLY.
THINKS AHEAD, AND MAKES JUDGMENTS
CONTROLS EMOTIONS
Why am I hungry?
Logic
INSTINCTUAL MARUO
DESIRES
INTUITION
LIKES AND DISLIKES
SENSES
WELL... YOU'RE RIGHT.
RATIONAL MARUO-KUN AND INSTINCTUAL MARUO-KUN ARE BOTH THE SAME PERSON, RIGHT? SO IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE ANY ONE SIDE COMPLETELY.
Instinct
I'm hungry...
IGNORE
I've gotta run faster I need to get stronger
It's hard... I'm tired... Sleepy... I'm scared of running
GUESS IT'S SOMETHING LIKE THIS
FOR EXAMPLE, "I'VE GOT TO DO IT" WAS COMING SO STRONGLY FROM MARUO-KUN'S REASON THAT YOU HAD STOPPED LISTENING TO YOUR INSTINCTS PROPERLY.
IS THAT A BAD THING?
IT'S NOT BAD, BUT IT'S NOT GOOD EITHER,
BECAUSE IT DOESN'T MEAN YOUR INSTINCTS WILL DISAP-PEAR.
THEY'RE ACTUALLY ALWAYS THERE AS YOUR OTHER HALF, HOLDING YOU BACK.

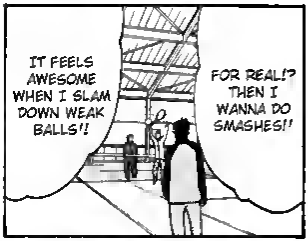
THE BEST CONDITION IS WHEN YOUR INSTINCTS TELL YOU "I WANNA DO IT!" WHEN YOUR REASON IS SAYING "I'VE GOT TO DO IT".
BUT SINCE YOU WON'T BE GETTING MUCH TRAINING DONE IF YOU LISTEN TO YOUR INSTINCTS TOO MUCH, YOU ALSO NEED YOUR REASON.
I wanna do it!
I'll do it!
INSTINCT
REASON
OF COURSE, IT'S NOT EASY TO REACH THIS STATE,
I've gotta do it. I've gotta do it!!
My arms are heavy.
I'm hungry.
My legs are tired.
IT'S NOT EFFICIENT TO KEEP ON PRACTICING IN THIS CONDITION.
THAT'S WHAT MARUO-KUN'S BEEN DOING FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS
THE VERY FIRST STEP TOWARDS THAT IS TO "LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR INSTINCT SAYS"
BUT YOU CAN GET CLOSER TO IT DEPENDING ON THE WAY YOU PRACTICE.
THEY SAY "YOU GET BETTER AT THINGS YOU LIKE", RIGHT?
IN OTHER WORDS, TO DO WHATEVER PRACTICE YOUR INSTINCT TELLS YOU TO DO.
SINCE YOU'VE DONE THAT, NEXT IS THE PRACTICE TO "MAKE INSTINCT YOUR ALLY".

BUT... I TEND TO LIKE ALL PRACTICE EQUALLY.

YOU CAN CONCENTRATE BETTER ON PRACTICE IF IT'S FUN, AND YOU'LL IMPROVE QUICKLY AS A RESULT.
WHEN YOU GET BETTER AT SOMETHING, YOUR DESIRE TO USE THAT SKILL MORE EFFECTIVELY ENCOURAGES YOU TO GET BETTER AT OTHER THINGS, TOO.
THIS COMPOUNDING EFFECT CAN BE PRETTY HUGE.

...


JUST LIKE HOW YOU'VE BEEN ASKING YOUR INSTINCTS FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS
THEN YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO THE MOST RIGHT NOW.


IT FEELS AWESOME WHEN I SLAM DOWN WEAK BALLS'!
FOR REAL!? THEN I WANNA DO SMASHES!!

YUKICHI~~!!
WE'LL BE PRACTICING SOME FREESTYLES NOW, SO WE'LL START WITH WHATEVER YOU WANT
THEN LET'S START PRACTICING.

U---M... LET'S SEE
HOW ABOUT MARUO-KUN?

I THINK I'LL GO WITH STROKES
RECENTLY, I'VE BEEN GOING "YES" WHEN I HIT MY TARGET
HA
BECAUSE OF THE BREAK, IT FEELS LIKE "I WANT TO" IS STRONGER THAN "I'VE GOT TO".

ONLY WHEN YOU'VE MANAGED TO HIT ONE COMPLETE SHOT WITH BOTH OF THESE WILL YOU START TO IMPROVE.
THE ACCUMULATION OF THESE SHOTS RESULTS IN CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT.
AND AWARENESS OF WHERE YOUR BALL WILL LAND
IN TENNIS, THERE'S A SENSATION YOU GET FROM HITTING THE BALL,
THE MORE OF THOSE I CAN HIT, THE BETTER MY CONTROL GETS
ONE COMPLETE SHOT... IT'S WHEN I AM COMPLETELY AWARE OF HOW I HIT THE BALL AND WHERE THE BALL WILL LAND.

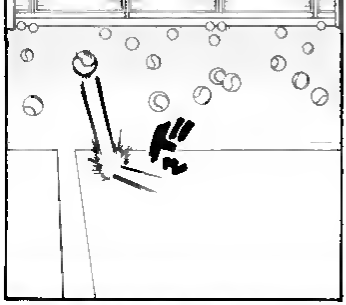
YOU LEARNED BOLT "ONE COMPLETE SHOT" FROM COACH MIURA, RIGHT?
REMEMBER THAT.

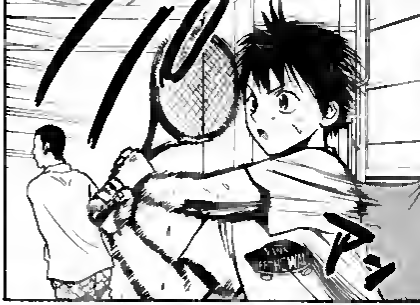
THE MORE I THINK LIKE THAT, THE STRONGER THE MENTAL IMAGE...

I SEE
HE'S TELLING ME TO FOCUS NOT ONLY ON THE QUANTITY, BUT ALSO ON THE OVERALL QUALITY.

1164... I WANT TO HIT IT IN THERE!!

OF HOW I HIT THE BALL AND WHERE IT'LL LAND.
ALL RIGHT!
VANS "OFF THE WALL"
GOOD SHOT!!
A
IF I CAN ALWAYS DO THIS... I CAN DEFINITELY GET BETTER.
HERE COMES THE NEXT ONE!
MAYBE THIS PERSON REALLY IS PRETTY AMAZING?





MARUO-KUN, HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE BETWEEN-THE-LEGS SHOT?
Yukichi's heard of it, right?
BETWEEN-THE-LEGS SHOT?

ALL RI~~GHT. LET'S TRY A MORE INTERESTING PRACTICE THIS TIME

HERE, YUKICHI!

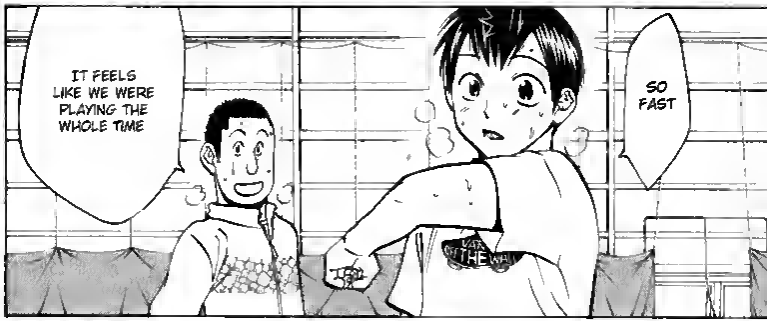
YOU MEAN THAT TRICK SHOT?
WRONG!! DESPITE IT'S APPEARANCE, IT'S A PROPER SHOT.

IN THAT SITUATION, IT'S BETTER TO HIT BETWEEN YOUR LEGS THAN FORCEFULLY TURNING AROUND, SINCE A BETWEEN-THE-LEGS SHOT IS MORE POWERFUL, EASIER TO CONTROL, AND HARDER FOR YOUR OPPONENT TO READ.
HOWEVER, YOU DON'T HAVE ANY SPARE TIME TO TURN AROUND AND HIT IT.
EVEN IF SOMETHING LIKE A LOB GOES OVER YOUR HEAD, YOU CAN STILL SORT OF GET TO IT.
..... GEEZ, SUCH A SLAVE DRIVER.
AND THAT'S WHY YOU SHOULD PRACTICE BEFOREHAND, SO THAT YOU'RE PREPARED IN A MATCH

HA
ビッ
IT'S GOOD TO PUT AT LEAST THAT MUCH SPEED ON IT.
HE.. HE'S GOOD.
DESPITE HIS LOOKS, HE'S STILL TECHNICALLY A FORMER PRO
HERE, MARUO-KUN.
SCARY.
DWAH
ひょん

CLOSE, CLOSE.
TRY TO HIT THE BALL RIGHT BEFORE ITS SECOND BOUNCE.
TAKE THIS!
THAT'S IT!!
THAT WAS GOOD, MARUO-KUN.
VANS OFF THE WALL

IT'S THIS LATE ALREADY!?
EH!?
MARUO-KUN, YOU'VE GOT WEIGHT TRAINING AFTER
IT'S ALMOST TIME, SO THAT'S IT FOR TODAY.
ALL RIGHT

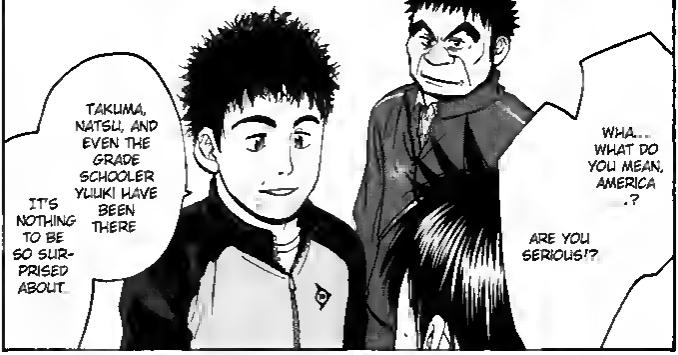

IT FEELS LIKE WE WERE PLAYING THE WHOLE TIME
SO FAST

BUT EVEN WITH THIS, IT'S STILL NOT ENOUGH...
HE'S RIGHT... EVEN THOUGH WE MOVED QUITE A LOT, I STILL HAVE SOME ENERGY TO SPARE.
YOU ALSO LEARNED THAT YOU'RE LESS LIKELY TO GET TIRED IF THE PRACTICE IS FUN, AND THAT YOU CAN IMPROVE MUCH FASTER.
BUT YOU GUYS HAVE NOW GOT THE HANG OF HITTING BETWEEN-THE-LEGS SHOTS.

MARUO-KUN, YOUR GOAL IS TO WIN IN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR THAT WILL BE HELD IN HALF A YEAR, RIGHT?
IF WE CONTINUE PRACTICING LIKE THIS FOR THE REMAINING DAYS, I'M SURE YOU'LL DEFINITELY BE ABLE TO FIGHT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL.
BUT IT'S A TOTALLY DIFFERENT MATTER WHEN IT COMES TO WINNING IT.
NOT... ENOUGH?
?
YOU'D NEED TO GET MUCH, MUCH STRONGER RESULTS FROM PRACTICE.
IS THERE ONE? A MUCH QUICKER WAY TO GET BETTER?
...
WANNA KNOW?
UH~M... CAN YOU PLEASE STOP DRAGGING ON EVERY LITTLE THING?
ALL RIGHT...
UMM... IT'S NOT THAT THERE ISN'T ONE...
VANS

THEN GO TO AMERICA.

A... AMERICA?


TAKUMA, NATSU, AND EVEN THE GRADE SCHOOLER YUUKI HAVE BEEN THERE
IT'S NOTHING TO BE SO SURPRISED ABOUT.
WHA... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, AMERICA...?
ARE YOU SERIOUS!?

DO YOU KNOW WHY TENNIS IN THE UNITED STATES IS A COUPLE OF LEVELS HIGHER THAN IN JAPAN?
IF YOU GO, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE IT FIRSTHAND.
THERE'S A FACILITY IN FLORIDA WHERE YOU CAN GO FOR A SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD SESSION DURING YOUR TWO WEEK WINTER BREAK.

VANS
OFF THE WALL
W... WHY DOES THIS PERSON KEEP TRYING TO THROW ME OUT?

ESPECIALLY ON YOUR TENNIS THAT NEEDS TO MAKE GREAT IMPROVEMENTS IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME.
THAT EXPERIENCE SHOULD HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON THE WAY YOU PLAY TENNIS IN THE FUTURE...

IF THERE WAS A SHORTCUT TO WINNING THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR,
I THINK THIS WOULD BE THE ONLY ONE... WHAT DO YOU THINK?

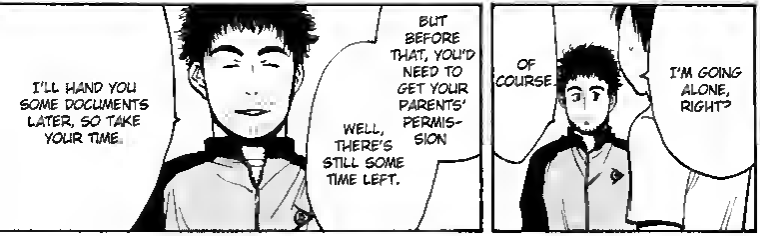
imangascans.org
imangascans
rc.rchighway.net

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: Busaway
Proofreader: Georgi
Q-Checker: ilikefood

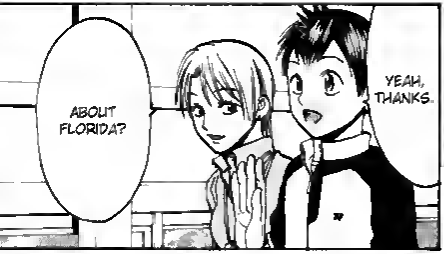
A... AMERICA!?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?


I'M GOING ALONE, RIGHT?
OF COURSE.
BUT BEFORE THAT, YOU'D NEED TO GET YOUR PARENTS' PERMISSION.
WELL, THERE'S STILL SOME TIME LEFT.
I'LL HAND YOU SOME DOCUMENTS LATER, SO TAKE YOUR TIME.

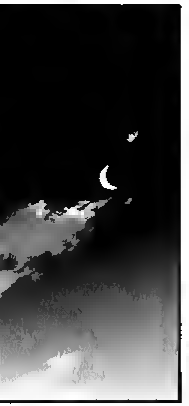
ANYWAY, IF WE THINK OF PATHS PREPARING YOU FOR "BATTLES THAT CAN'T BE LOST",
THIS IS PROBABLY THE BEST SHORTCUT.
WHAT, WHAT? EI-CHAN'S FINALLY GOING TO AMERICA?
AH... NACCHAN.
#72 DIFFERENT WORLD

UMM, IT FEELS LIKE THERE'S EVERYTHING THAT YOU'D POSSIBLY NEED TO GET BETTER AT TENNIS.
THE FACILITIES, THE PEOPLE, AND THE WAYS OF THINKING... JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING!
YOU'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE, RIGHT?
HOW WAS IT?
IF YOU CAN, YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY GO.
NAH... I DON'T KNOW YET.
YOU'LL PROBABLY BE EVEN MORE SURPRISED THERE.
YOU WERE SURPRISED WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE, RIGHT?
AH, THAT'S RIGHT. I THINK YUUKI JUST WENT THERE RECENTLY FOR THE FIRST TIME, SO WHY DON'T YOU ASK HIM?
IS THAT SO?
HMM...

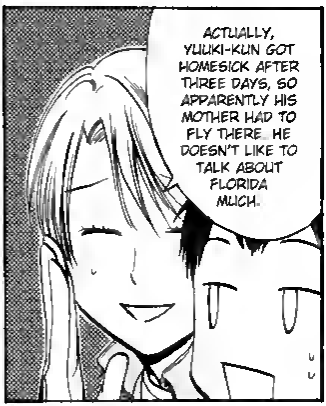
FLORIDA, HUH?
HOW WAS IT?
WELL, GUESS IT FELT LIKE I'D FINALLY MET RIVALS ON MY AGE LEVEL.
THE WORLD WAS AS BIG AS EXPECTED.

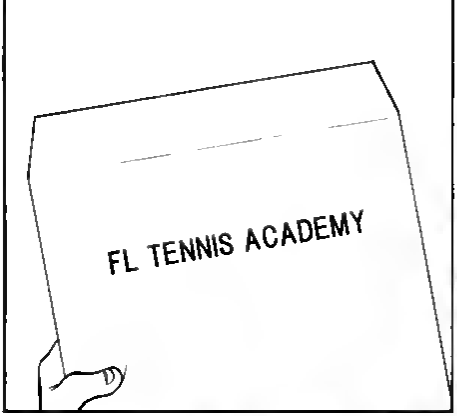

YEAH, THANKS.
ABOUT FLORIDA?

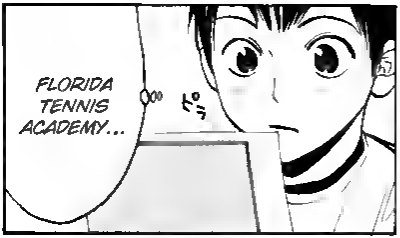
OHHH!!
Leave it to the prodigy!!
WELL I'LL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT IT NEXT TIME
I am in a rush

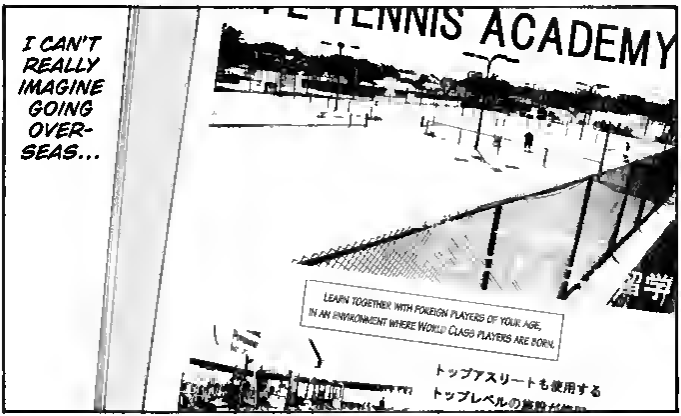


OVERSEAS EXPERIENCES CAN VARY A LOT FROM PERSON TO PERSON.
BUT EITHER WAY, IT'S DEFINITELY GOOD TO EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT CULTURES, SO IT'D BE GREAT IF YOU CAN GO


ACTUALLY, YUUKI-KUN GOT HOMESICK AFTER THREE DAYS, SO APPARENTLY HIS MOTHER HAD TO FLY THERE. HE DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT FLORIDA MUCH.


FL TENNIS ACADEMY


FLORIDA TENNIS ACADEMY...


I CAN'T REALLY IMAGINE GOING OVER-SEAS...
TENNIS ACADEMY
LEARN TOGETHER WITH FOREIGN PLAYERS OF YOUR AGE, IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE WORLD CLASS PLAYERS ARE BORN.
トップアスリートも使用する
トップレベルの

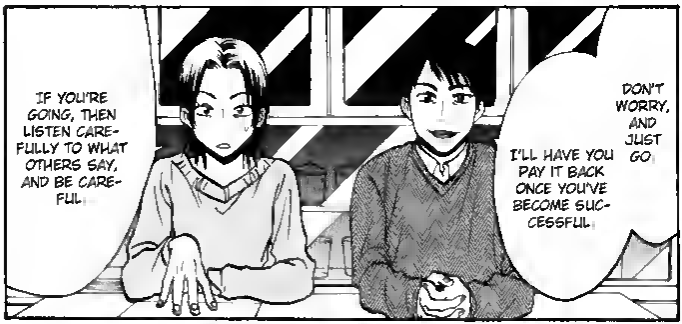
池　爽児
20** ATP年末
20** ATP年末
20**
WOW. AMAZING.
THIS ACADEMY PRODUCED A LOT OF NO 1 PLAYERS ON THE WORLD STAGE
SOME OF THEM ARE EVEN AMONG ST THE CUR-RENT TOP-LEVEL PROS THAT I KNOW.
AH!! IKE-KUN!!
THAT'S RIGHT HE SAID HE'S IN FLORIDA
コーチ
マイ
NIKE-SAN TOO!!
SO HE'S ONE OF THE STAFF.
THERE ARE ALSO A WHOLE BUNCH OF OTHER STAFF
...BASED ON WHAT EVERYONE SAID,
AND CONSIDERING MY CURRENT TENNIS, THERE'S NO REASON NOT TO GO.
IF THERE WAS ONE, THEN IT WOULD BE...

*TL NOTE: ¥380,000 = $4884.33 USD.

CALM DOWN A BIT.
WHAT ABOUT NEW YEAR? GRANDMA LOOKS FORWARD TO YOUR VISIT EVERY YEAR.
I KNEW IT.
-oO
W...WELL, YEAH FOR VARIOUS REASONS
DO YOU REALLY NEED TO GO ALL THE WAY TO AMERICA?

AND DON'T THEY SAY YOU SHOULD LET YOUR PRECIOUS KIDS TRAVEL?
WE DECIDED TO SUPPORT HIM PLAYING TENNIS TILL NEXT SUMMER, RIGHT?

E... EVERY-THING IS ON ME?
YOU'VE GOT THOSE SAVINGS, RIGHT? INSIDE THAT OLD BAG STASHED AT THE FAR END OF THE DRAWER.
H. .HOW DID YOU KNOW?
UMMM. . YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE TO OVERDO IT.
D...DON'T SAY THAT!! OF COURSE WE'RE FINE!!

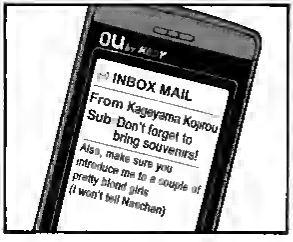

DON'T WORRY, AND JUST GO.
I'LL HAVE YOU PAY IT BACK ONCE YOU'VE BECOME SUC-CESSFUL.
IF YOU'RE GOING, THEN LISTEN CARE-FULLY TO WHAT OTHERS SAY, AND BE CARE-FUL.

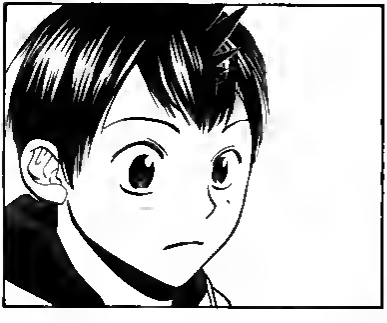
MAPS
I REALLY THINK I'M BLESSED
GO DO YOUR BEST!!
YEAH!
THANK YOU!
THA...

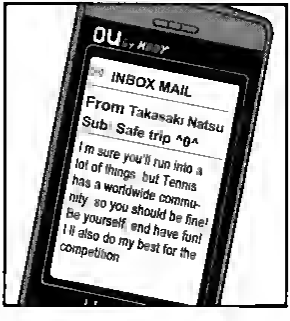
SINCE I'M ACTUALLY GOING, I SHOULD DEFINITELY COME BACK WITH SOMETHING!!
ANYWAY, IF WE THINK OF PATHS PREPARING YOU FOR "BATTLES THAT CAN'T BE LOST",
FLORIDA, FLORIDA... IT'S HERE.
TO GET READY, I'VE GOTTA FIRST...
...MY HEART'S STARTING TO BEAT FASTER NOW THAT I'M REALLY GOING...
ミナ
ミナ
Nice to meet you
はじめまして
I'm from
日本から
Japan
来ました
My name is
私は
Eiichiro Maruo
丸尾栄一郎です
THIS IS PROBABLY THE BEST SHORTCUT.
AM I REALLY GOING THERE?

CITIZEN
FINALLY, THE DAY OF DEPARTURE.

I TOOK CARE OF THE PAPER-WORK FOR THE TRIP, AND SOON WINTER BREAK HAD ARRIVED.
AFTER THAT, WHILE CONTINUING MY USUAL PRACTICE...


ou by KDDI
INBOX MAIL
From Kageyama Kojirou
Sub Don't forget to bring souvenirs!
Also, make sure you introduce me to a couple of pretty hinted girls
(I won't tell Nanchen)

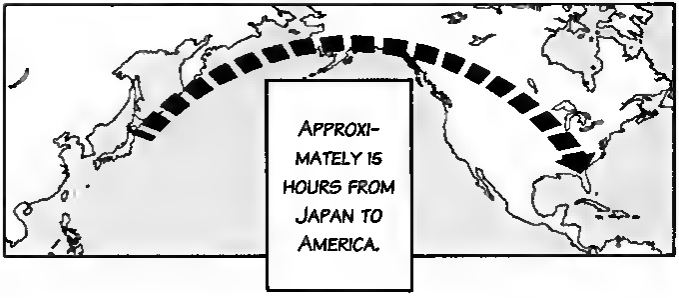



ou by KDDI
INBOX MAIL
From Takasaki Natsu
Sub Safe trip ^0^
I'm sure you'll run into a lot of things but Tennis has a worldwide community so you should be fine! Be yourself and have fun! I'll also do my best for the competition

HERE I GO.
THEN,

AH... YEAH
EIICHIRO, ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME?

I KNOW.
CONTACT LIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF SOMETHING HAPPENS.


APPROXI-MATELY 15 HOURS FROM JAPAN TO AMERICA.

Since the plane flies east at super high speed, the sun came right back up the moment after I thought it had sunk.
And by the time I got to Florida, it was afternoon... I'm already totally jetlagged .

I'M FINALLY HERE...
ボー
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ
WAVE

SARASOTA BRADENTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
SRQ
ゴォォ..

ANYWAY THANK GOOD-NESS I ARRIVED SAFELY.
It's warmer than Japan, I think.

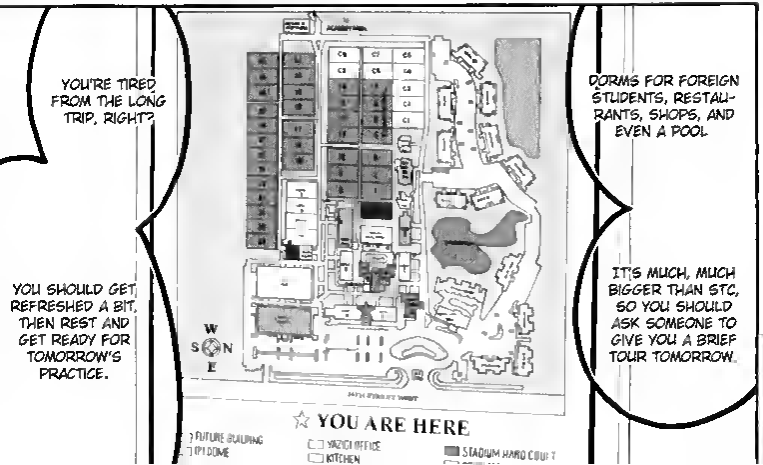
NOT JUST PEOPLE EVEN THE SCENERY AND THE AT-MOSPHERE FEEL TOTALLY DIFFERENT.
WOW IT'S REALLY AMERICA!!

MIKE!! LONG TIME NO SEE~
I'M HERE!!

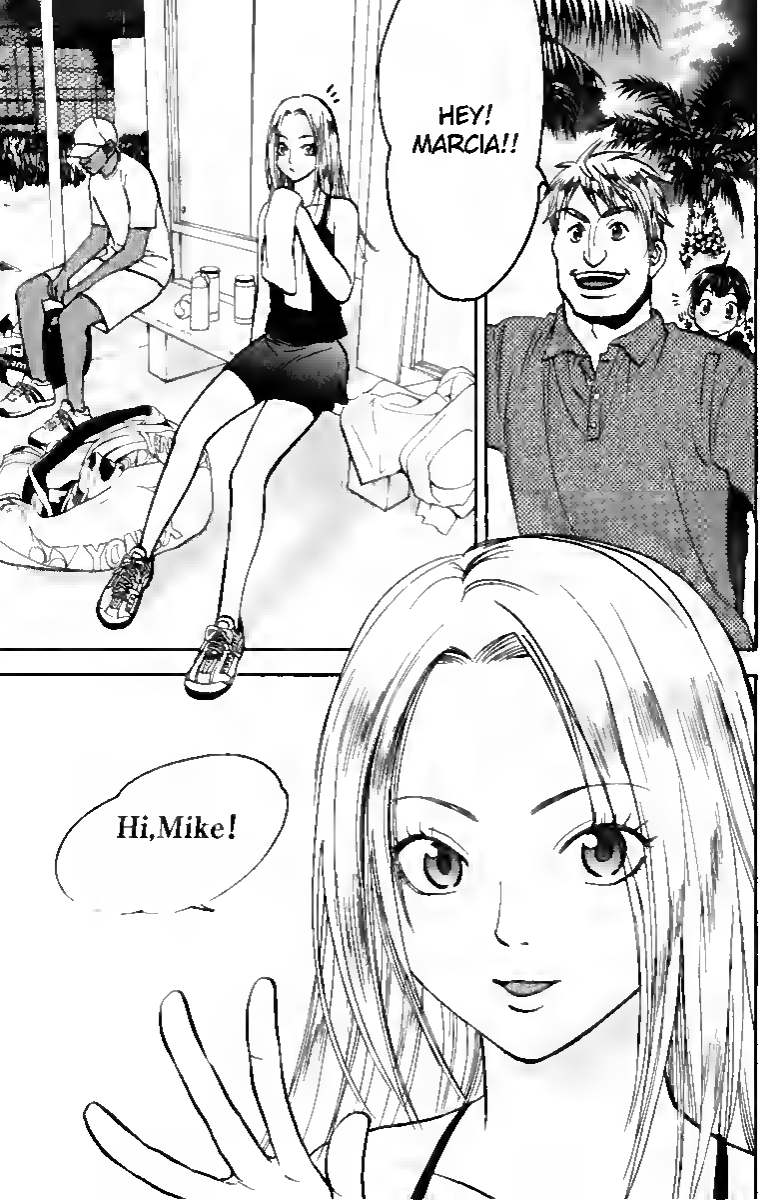
E!~ CHA~N!!
THAT'S RIGHT, THE ONE PICKING ME UP

Welcome to Florida!
I'VE HEARD EVERYTHING FROM COACH MIURA LET'S WORK HARD TOGETHER
THEN, SHALL WE GO?
YES.
WOOOOW, THE ROADS ARE SO WIDE!!
THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME HERE, RIGHT?
Y...YES
HOW'S YOUR ENGLISH?
ALL I KNOW IS WHAT I LEARNED FROM SCHOOL SO NOT MUCH...

WELL, WE'RE HERE!
THIS IS THE ENTRANCE OF FLORIDA TENNIS ACADEMY.
THERE'S NOTHING MUCH IN THE VICINITY. BUT EVERYTHING YOU NEED IS PROVIDED INSIDE THE ACADEMY SO NO WORRIES.
EVEN THE ENTRANCE IS THIS HUGE.


YOU'RE TIRED FROM THE LONG TRIP, RIGHT?
YOU SHOULD GET REFRESHED A BIT, THEN REST AND GET READY FOR TOMORROW'S PRACTICE.
DORMS FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS, RESTAURANTS, SHOPS, AND EVEN A POOL
IT'S MUCH, MUCH BIGGER THAN STC, SO YOU SHOULD ASK SOMEONE TO GIVE YOU A BRIEF TOUR TOMORROW.
W
S
N
E
☆ YOU ARE HERE
FUTURE BUILDING
DOME
YAZICI OFFICE
KITCHEN
STADIUM HARD COURT

AMAZING... IT'S LIKE A TENNIS TOWN.
I'LL BE STAYING HERE AND PLAYING TENNIS.
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT..


HEY! MARCIA!!
Hi, Mike!

WOW... SHE'S REALLY PRETTY.
I WONDER WHAT THEY'RE SAYING.
SHE'S MARCIA, A JUNIOR PLAYER OF OURS. IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'S JUST FINISHED TODAY'S PRACTICE.
HU...H UH?
BUT SHE SAYS SHE'LL PLAY YOU FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR JETLAG.
EH!?
Marcia !
NICE TO MEET YOU.

imangascans.org
imangascans
rc.rchighway.net

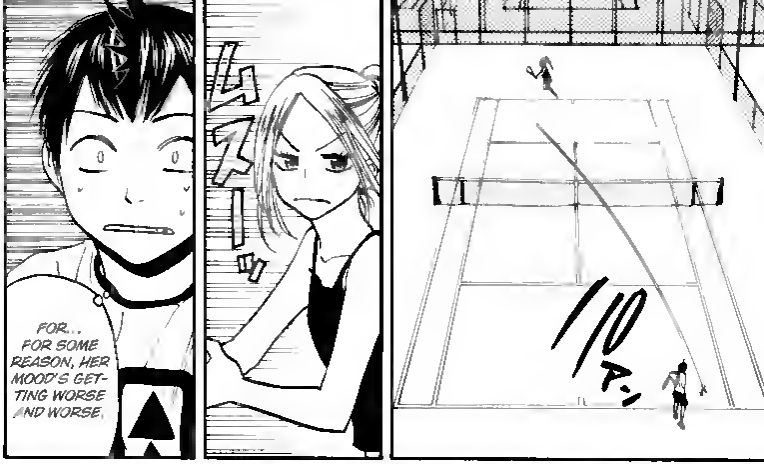
Baby Steps

RAWs: Share
Cleaner: Stark
Translator: Ruggia
Typesetter: Busaway
Proofreader: Georgi
Q-Checker: ilikefood

I I'm Maruo Eichiro
Nice to meet you
AH...
I'm Marcia.
Eichiro...? Nice to meet you.
TL NOTE: IN AMERICA THEY PRONOUNCE EICHIRO'S NAME IN SHORT FORM AS EICHIRO
He's a 17 year old short-term overseas student aiming to be a pro He just arrived from Japan so he's suffering from jetlag Can you help him get refreshed for about 30 minutes?
Got it.
Then Court No.3, okay?
AH SHE IS?
SHE'S OUR VERY PROMISING JUNIOR PLAYER, SO DON'T GO TOO HARD ON HER
Baby Steps

#73 IN FLORIDA
Ha !
THE BALL CAME FLYING AT ME
OREGON
International
HOW DOES SHE HIT SUCH STRONG BALLS WITH THAT THIN BODY?

Sorry!
How does he not miss a shot at all?
It's like practicing against a machine
BUT. IT'S A BIT ROUGH.
Shit!
MAYBE... HER TEMPER'S ROUGH TOO?

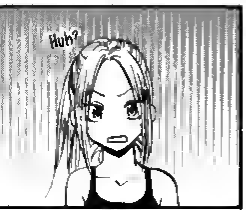

FOR... FOR SOME REASON, HER MOOD'S GETTING WORSE AND WORSE.
ハァー!!
ANYWAY...
MAYBE HER CONDITION'S BAD?
IT'S NOT MY FAULT, RIGHT?

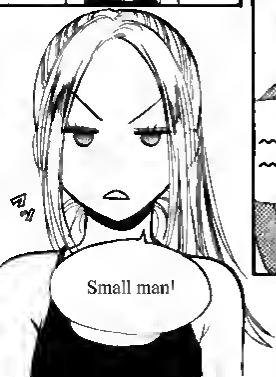
I GUESS IT DOESN'T MEAN EVERYONE'S CRAZY STRONG CAUSE IT'S AMERICA.
I WAS NERVOUS CAUSE SHE WAS A PROMISING PLAYER IN THIS PLACE,
BUT SHE'S NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM THE JUNIOR GIRLS IN STC.
Nacchan's better

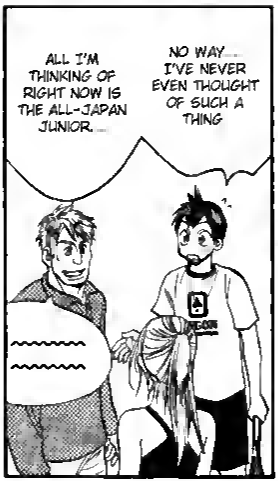
You're pretty good.
Guess you're aiming for the French Open?
EH...?

Thanks Marcia.
Alright, that's fine!!

Ah... tha... thank you.


Huh?

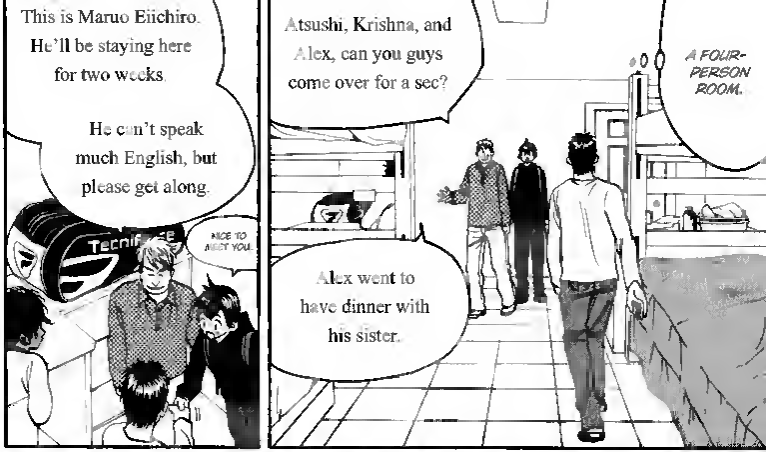

Small man!

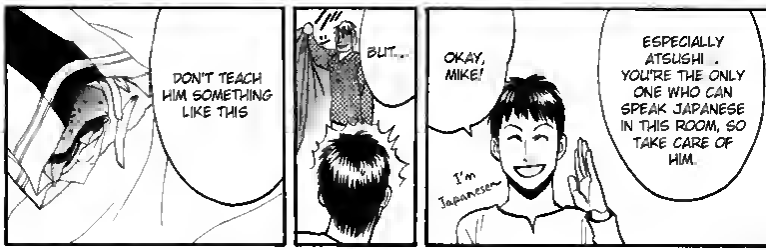

ALL I'M THINKING OF RIGHT NOW IS THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR...
NO WAY... I'VE NEVER EVEN THOUGHT OF SUCH A THING

What?
OREGON
SHE'S ASKING IF YOU'RE AIMING FOR THE STABILITY FOCUSED FRENCH OPEN, RATHER THAN THE SPEED FOCUSED WIMBLEDON

I SORT OF FEEL LIKE SHE JUST MADE FUN OF ME...
YUP. SHE SAID YOU'RE A SMALL MAN.
HA HA HA
If you can become a Pro with just that, I'd like you to take my brother to Japan too
SINCE HER BROTHER'S HAVING A HARD TIME AFTER JUST BECOMING A PRO RECENTLY
SHE SAYS SHE WANTS YOU TO TAKE HIM TO JAPAN, SINCE EVEN YOU CAN BE ONE.
She's totally looking down on you
WELL, A LOT OF KIDS HERE ARE PRETTY STUBBORN, SO DON'T BE WORRIED BY ALL THE LITTLE THINGS
MARCIA MAY HAVE A BAD MOUTH, BUT SHE'S NOT A BAD GIRL, SO FORGIVE HER
O. OKAY
WELL THEN, I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR DORM NOW
It's already dark

HERE, THIS WAY.
H..hi, Mike!
....

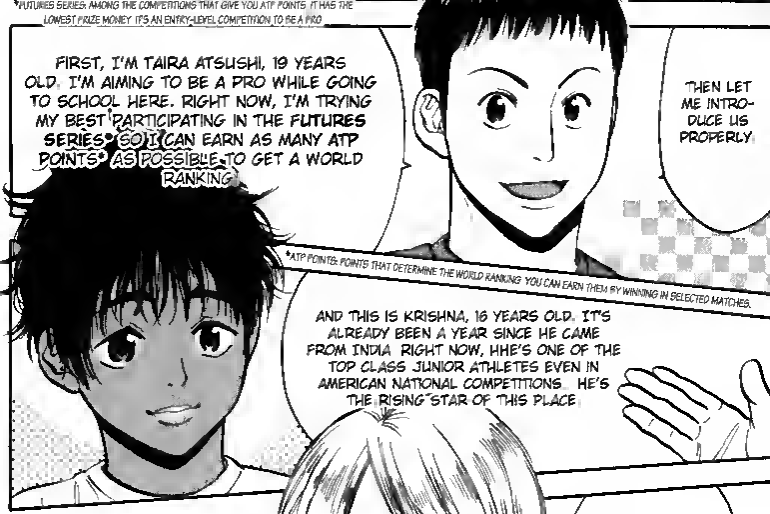

This is Maruo Eiichiro. He'll be staying here for two weeks.
He can't speak much English, but please get along.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
Atsushi, Krishna, and Alex, can you guys come over for a sec?
A FOUR-PERSON ROOM.
Alex went to have dinner with his sister.


DON'T TEACH HIM SOMETHING LIKE THIS
BUT...
OKAY, MIKE!
I'm Japanese.
ESPECIALLY ATSUSHI. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SPEAK JAPANESE IN THIS ROOM, SO TAKE CARE OF HIM.

S sorry
?
GO TAKE HIM TO DINNER, THEN.

THE MENU SEEMS PRETTY DIVERSE, RIGHT?
YEAH
HE DIDN'T TELL YOU YET?
EH? YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO EAT ANY-WHERE OTHER THAN HERE?
THAT'S WHY HE W.S SCOLDED.
もぐもぐ
SO THEY EVEN CONDITION THE ATHLETES' DIET, HUH?
SOMETIMES YOU WANT HUGE BURGERS OR STEAK... MASHED POTATOES LOADED WITH CREAM,
SWEET AND REFRESHING CARBONATED DRINKS TOO
BUT IF YOU STAY HERE FOR OVER HALF A YEAR LIKE ME, YOU GET TIRED OF EATING ONLY VEGETABLES, WHITE FISH, AND CHICKEN.
WELL, IF YOU EVER HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, FEEL FREE TO ..SK ME.
OKAY.
BUT I'M A LOT MORE AT EASE EATING WITH A FELLOW JAPANESE..
I FEEL LIKE EATING NATTO AND STUFF NOW.

*FUTURES SERIES: AMONG THE COMPETITIONS THAT GIVE YOU ATP POINTS, IT HAS THE LOWEST PRIZE MONEY. IT'S AN ENTRY-LEVEL COMPETITION TO BE A PRO.


FIRST, I'M TAIRA ATSUSHI, 19 YEARS OLD. I'M AIMING TO BE A PRO WHILE GOING TO SCHOOL HERE. RIGHT NOW, I'M TRYING MY BEST PARTICIPATING IN THE FUTURES SERIES* SO I CAN EARN AS MANY ATP POINTS* AS POSSIBLE TO GET A WORLD RANKING.
THEN LET ME INTRO-DUCE HIS PROPERLY.

*ATP POINTS: POINTS THAT DETERMINE THE WORLD RANKING. YOU CAN EARN THEM BY WINNING IN SELECTED MATCHES.

AND THIS IS KRISHNA, 16 YEARS OLD. IT'S ALREADY BEEN A YEAR SINCE HE CAME FROM INDIA. RIGHT NOW, HHE'S ONE OF THE TOP CLASS JUNIOR ATHLETES EVEN IN AMERICAN NATIONAL COMPETITIONS. HE'S THE RISING STAR OF THIS PLACE.
RECENTLY, HE EARNED ATP POINTS AND FINALLY MANAGED TO ADVANCE TO THE TOP 1000 IN WORLD RANKINGS.
AND THIS IS ALEX, WHO'S AROUND MY AGE. HE'S ALREADY A PROFESSIONAL PLAYER AND DOESN'T GO TO SCHOOL ANYMORE.

My... my name is Maruo Eiichiro. I came from Japan.,, I'm 17 years old. I want to become a professional tennis player. Nice to meet you.
THEN CAN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TOO, MARUO-KUN?
A PRO!!
AH...
HE SAYS HIS SISTER DID SOMETHING BAD TO YOU.
YOU MET MARCIA?
It seems like my sister said some rude things to you I'm sorry
Perhaps you're the Japanese Mike brought with him...?
EH?
THEY'RE GOOD LOOKING SIBLINGS~
Ah Ah!
HER BROTHER?
MARCIA...
Hi, Mike!

DID YOU... UNDERSTAND THAT?
UMM... "IS IT TRUE THAT ATSUSHI-SAN IS FAMOUS IN JAPAN," RIGHT?
Is it true that Atsushi is famous in Japan?
Can I ask you something?
EH? AH, A QUESTION?
Go ahead
HAHAHA!
SHUT UP!!
THANK GOODNESS THAT THEY'RE ALL NICE PEOPLE
Hey there! What are you guys whispering about!!
HAHAHA
WELL, YEAH.
ARE YOU... REALLY?
ALL RIGHT! LET'S GO TO SLEEP
WE HAVE TO WAKE UP EARLY TOMORROW.
THIS IS YOUR BED, MARUO-KUN
THAT WAS HOW MY FIRST DAY WENT...

NEXT DAY, I FINALLY STARTED MY STUDY ABROAD IN FLORIDA.
WAKE UP: 5:30 AM.
Ah… yes.
Morning~
Did you sleep well?
Can I take this seat?
BREAKFAST 6:00

!!
HEY~ MARUO-KUN YOU'RE HERE!
I... IKE-KUN!
MARUO-KUN, YOU KNOW IKE-KUN?
YES. RIGHT NOW, I'M IN IKE-KUN'S FORMER CLUB, SO WE PLAYED TENNIS TOGETHER ONCE.
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU DIDN'T FORGET, RIGHT?
I HAVE A ONE POINT DEBT TO PAY..
He's pretty close to Souji?
Ahahaha
MAYBE HE'S STRONG?
They didn't tell me this
DEBT... DOES HE MEAN THAT!?
IS HE THE TYPE OF PERSON TO HOLD GRUDGES ...?

HEY~ THIS WAY, THIS WAY.
IT'S FINALLY COURT PRACTICE
7:00 WARM UP.
WE STILL DON'T HIT ANYTHING?
EH?
8:00 MEETING ROOM.
HERE, THIS ONE IS IN JAPANESE
PAPER?
BULKELEY

WHAT IS THIS?
Name
Amount of Sleep
Quality of Sleep
Amount of Food
Quality of Food
Motivation
Scale: 1~5
Places that hurt
Weight
Remarks/Question
HERE, WE START OFF EVERY DAY BY FIRST MAKING SURE EACH PLAYER IS AWARE OF THEIR BODY'S STATE BY CHECKING THEIR DIET, SLEEP, AND BODY CONDITIONS.

IT'S THE SAME THING COACH AOI SAID.

FURTHERMORE, BY HOLDING A SMALL MEETING, WE MAKE EACH PERSON'S GOALS CLEAR BEFORE WE START PRACTICE
AND THEN WE ALSO LET THE COACH KNOW ABOUT IT.

SO~ EI-CHAN WRITE, WRITE!

3
2
3
3
5
FIRST, LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR INSTINCTS SAY...
9:00. START PRACTICE.
WOW
THEY . THEY ARE GOOD !!
BULKELEY

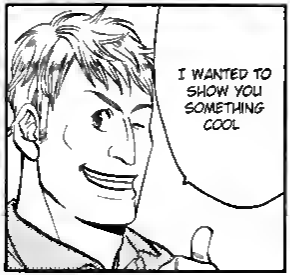
THESE ARE CLASSES FOR PEOPLE WHO JUST BECAME PROS, OR ARE AIMING TO BE PROS.
AND PLAYERS GET DIVIDED INTO 8 CLASSES FROM A THROUGH H BASED ON THEIR SKILLS
RIGHT NOW, THERE ARE ABOUT 20 PEOPLE IN THAT A~D.
PEOPLE WHO'RE HIGHER THAN THIS HAVE PERSONAL TRAINING.
BASICALLY, THEY'RE TOURNAMENT PROS LIKE IKE SOUJI WHO HAVE A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT COACHES THANKS TO THEIR PRIZE OR CONTRACT MONEY
EVEN FOR PROS, THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF LEVELS. THE PROS IN THIS CLASS BARELY MAKE A LIVING AFTER PAYING OFF THEIR LESSON FEES AND LIVING EXPENSES.
EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE IN THE SAME FACILITY, THE GAP BETWEEN THEM AND TOURNAMENT PROS IS LIKE HEAVEN AND EARTH.

YES!
NEXT!
I LIKE THIS PLACE 'CAUSE I CAN HAVE A CLOSE LOOK AT BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN
HA
HA

SEEMS LIKE THE CONTENTS OF THE PRACTICE AREN'T MUCH DIFFERENT FROM STC.

ALL RIGHT, LET'S REST FOR A BIT.

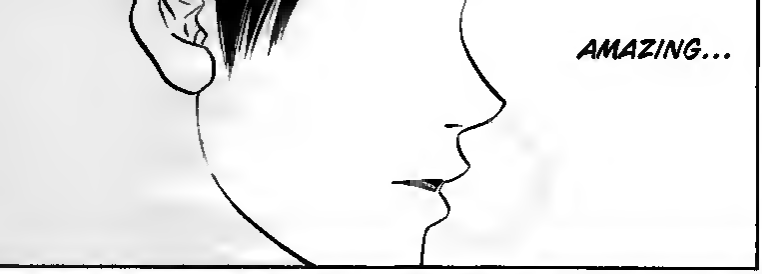
SOME-THING COOL?

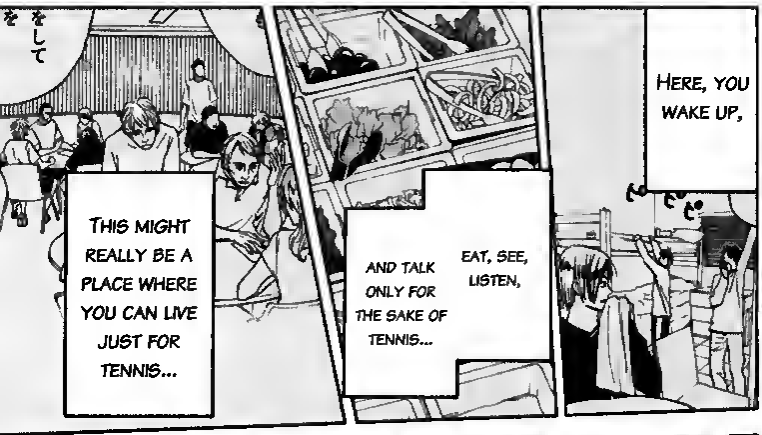

I WANTED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING COOL

WHAT'S WRONG?
EI-CHAN, CAN YOU COME FOR A SEC?

LOOK AT THIS.
カチ
カチ
THIS IS... ME?
WHEN DID YOU TAKE THIS?
THERE ARE A COUPLE OF CAMERAS ON THE SIDES OF EACH COURT.
AND THIS ROOM IS HERE SO YOU CAN ALWAYS SEE HOW YOU PLAY AND CHECK YOUR FORM.

ALSO, WE HAVE TRAINING ROOMS FULL OF WORLD CLASS MACHINES.
THERE'S ALSO AN EXPERT TRAINER THERE, SO YOU CAN RECEIVE COMPLETE REPORTS ON HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR FITNESS.
IN TERMS OF PSYCHOLOGY, WE HAVE MENTAL CONDITIONING COACHES LIKE ME THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS CONSULT WITH.
THAT'S NOT ALL
IF YOU HAVE ANY TECHNICAL QUESTIONS, THERE'S A SKILLS COACH WHO WILL ANSWER ANY OF THEM RIGHT AWAY.
HERE, EXPERTS FROM ALL THE FIELDS RELATED TO TENNIS ARE ALWAYS READY TO HELP MEET YOUR AMBITIONS.
THERE CAN'T BE A BETTER ATMOSPHERE TO IMPROVE YOUR TENNIS, RIGHT?
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HOW WELL EI-CHAN CAN MAKE USE OF THIS FACILITY.


AMAZING...


HERE, YOU WAKE UP,
EAT, SEE, LISTEN,
AND TALK ONLY FOR THE SAKE OF TENNIS...
THIS MIGHT REALLY BE A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN LIVE JUST FOR TENNIS...

WHEN I FIRST SAW IKE-KUN BECOME A PRO...
ALL THE THINGS OF WHICH I WAS JEALOUS

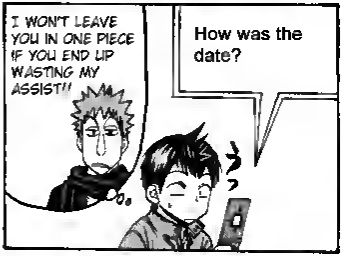
THEY MIGHT BE IN THIS PLACE!!

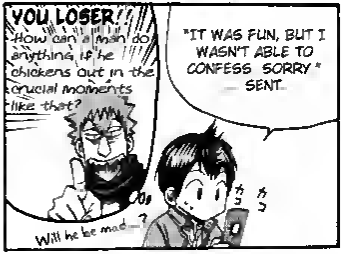
CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOURSELF TWO WEEKS FROM NOW, RIGHT?

TO BE CONTINUED IN VOL 9

Baby Steps ⑧ Extra

AFTER #70




YOU LOSER!!
How can a man do anything if he chickens out in the crucial moments like that?
Will he be mad—?
"IT WAS FUN, BUT I WASN'T ABLE TO CONFESS SORRY." — SENT

Date

Hi, this is Katsuki

Because #73 was extra-long, the omake pages were cut short (I'll apologize to folks who were looking forward to them).

We're already at volume 8

I was able to experiment with how my editor said "if it goes on for a long time it'd be great if you can take it overseas" I'm so happy

I might be the one who's the most excited about how much Eiichan will improve in America

However, even though I'm bad at drawing "handsome" characters I ended up setting Alex as a "handsome character" so I'm already fighting a tough battle.

I want to increase my level by working hard alongside the protagonist

Then see you on next volume

I'm sure the people who noticed were surprised out in #67, ★Kuro Mitsurou-sensei and ★Tanahashi Namoshiro-sensei came to visit

Thank you so much for the help!!

*TL NOTE: KURO MITSUROU IS THE MANGAKA OF 3 3 7 #YOOSHI, MOTEKI, AGAINE TANAHASHI NAMOSHIRO IS THE MANGAKA OF HAMMER SESSION. IT'S REFERRING TO HOW THE AUDIENCES WERE DRAWN BY THEM.